

# CLASS STRUGGLE

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NO.17

***Women's  
Liberation  
in the  
Connolly  
Tradition***



***S. AFRICAN  
REVOLUTION***



***What  
Socialist  
Response  
to Anglo-  
Irish Deal?***

**50  
PENCE**



# Class Struggle No.17

Bryan

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# ANGLO IRISH DEAL MAKES UNITED ACTION URGENT

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Whatever the apparent differences of interpretation in the loyalist and nationalist camps of what the Anglo-Irish Accord really means, what is crystal clear is that the ruling classes of Britain and Ireland have embarked upon the most serious, concerted and risky attempt since Sunningdale 12 years ago to stabilise their class rule in partitioned Ireland as a whole. As a result of the growing electoral successes of Sinn Fein in the North threatening to eclipse the constitutional bourgeois nationalists of the SDLP, the continued havoc wreaked upon both Ulster's security forces and its commercial property by the IRA, plus the possibility in the near future of SF abandoning its abstentionist dogma regarding the Dublin parliament and adding to the political instability of the Republic, the representatives in Ireland of imperialist capitalism have been forced to take steps which they believe can stop conditions and events sliding completely beyond their control.

That these steps involve measures from the respective governments of the Republic and Britain, and a government of Maggie Thatcher at that, which formally infringe constitutional proprieties, signifies not just the aggressive determination but the desperation of British Imperialism and its allies here to cobble together a means of achieving an internal devolved power-sharing regime which if it fails can only hasten the disintegration of bourgeois rule in Ireland as a whole.

The strong pressure for such a settlement, in particular upon Thatcher, from the USA and the EEC indicates the fearful perception of these parties that Ireland faces growing danger as a stable source of lucrative profits for large US and European investment and as a strategically important but 'undefended' coastal flank of the aggressively anti-Soviet NATO bloc.

There can be little doubt that they regard both Thatcher and Fitzgerald and their respective parties as infinitely more reliable and aggressive defenders of the global strategic interests of capital in Ireland than either Kinnock or Haughey, whose parties' traditional base and ideological baggage severely restrict the ground for the political and tactical manoeuvres that the Anglo-Irish agreement represents. Undoubtedly both Thatcher and Fitzgerald hope to see in any success of the settlement a restoration of their party fortunes and victory in the coming elections in Britain and the Republic, victories achieved on the basis of a resolute containment of Ulster loyalism.

For these reasons we can expect that the Thatcher government, while prepared to assure Paisley & Co. that the agreement is in no sense intended to "lead down the road to Dublin" (and she means what she says), will prosecute the settlement with all the ruthlessness that has characterised her defeat of Galtieri and the

miners. Though it is abundantly clear to all shades of loyalism that increased powers of repression are the major emphasis and content of the Accord, which both states will muster against Sinn Fein and the IRA and any anti-Unionists who defend them, it is also equally clear to Unionists that the price they are expected to pay, however minimal in reality, forfeits a crucial element of loyalism itself.

For, the terms of the Agreement clearly mean that the Republic's role, whether jurisdictional or consultative, is to lay the basis for minor concessions and reform across the board in matters of security, employment, democratic rights etc., leading to the establishment of a devolved power-sharing executive through which wider reforms might be expected to flow. This programme amounts to further attacks upon the historically supremacist position of loyalists in political, economic and social life, which the northern state itself was founded to guarantee.

It has been the existence and cynical operation of this system, which defined the 400,000 anti-Unionists as second class citizens in their own country and fuelled the conditions for their revolt in 1960. In proroguing the Belfast parliament at Stormont in March 1972 in order to defuse the insurgent mass revolt, the then Tory government of Edward Heath struck a major blow at the political apparatus and administrative machinery of the northern state through which Orange supremacy orchestrated its total discriminative hegemony over the lives of the catholic population as a whole and anti-Unionist workers in particular. By destroying Stormont, and through the institution of Direct Rule, Britain reformed the explicit anti-democratic corruption in the local-government electoral system, and introduced some reforms against discrimination in house allocation. But Britain did not (and had no wish to) seriously address the enormous social power of loyalism entrenched via the Orange and Masonic orders etc. which still effectively retained its power of patronage over large areas of employment in the Six Counties. The extent of the class alliance based on this patronage was decisively demonstrated in 1974 when, after the bluster and bluff of Paisley, Craig & Co. had signally failed to block the power-sharing Assembly of that year, the Ulster Workers Council strike brought the Sunningdale Agreement to an ignominious end.

After 14 years of direct rule the Fair Employment Agency can point out, even in the depth of a recession which has massively hit traditional protestant areas of employment in the Antrim Triangle etc., the protestant working class as a whole remains far less likely to suffer the effects of unemployment, low wages, poor conditions, insecurity etc. than their fellow catholic workers. In fact, catholics suffer a rate of unemployment twice that of protestants. The continued ability of loyalism to maintain and distribute



these marginal privileges throughout the protestant working class is the real material basis underlying all the cultural and symbolic mumbo jumbo embodied in its ideology. Without this, objective conditions alone would steadily dissolve the utterly bogus ties of self-interest which have united for generations the protestant proletariat with the ugly bigoted representatives of the propertied classes of the north.

That is why there is such a howl of pain and outrage from them today. Despite the all-too-honest assurances to the Unionists from Thatcher and Fitzgerald, and the promises of economic aid from Reagan and EEC bureaucrats - the latter gave a 30 millions grant for the new Derry bridge on the stipulation that the contract went to the north's Harland & Wolff - the loyalists cannot trust any interference in what is so essential to their social position.

It is not possible to confidently predict whether loyalism will succeed in destroying this latest imperialist-inspired initiative, or to do more than speculate on the forms that may be taken by opposition to it. Certainly, loyalism retains the power to do what was achieved in 1974 although there are many factors which have changed in the last 11 years to make another general strike less possible and less likely to succeed. One of the most important must be the perception by loyalists that in setting out to oppose the accord in principle, they will be forced by Thatcher to contemplate the alternative of a unilateral declaration of independence. The test of the loyalists' determination will be how far unity of purpose, so vital if they are to win, can be maintained in the face of such an option which would clearly undermine the whole basis of the Six County economy and state.

What must be of immediate and urgent concern for revolutionary communists is that whatever the outcome, the minority in the north will be faced by enemies stepping up their determination to destroy once and for all every sign and vestige of resistance to their state. And in the process of mobilising against the Accord, loyalists, as in the past, will undoubtedly seek to spread fear and terror through every vulnerable section of the anti-Unionist population, and even among civilians in the south. Both Thatcher and Fitzgerald, in the spirit of their deal, and in order to weaken the loyalist drive for a common front against it, will be only too ready to step up the scale of state terror against the republican movement and the anti-unionist working class masses while mouthing platitudes about reforms and concessions which most anti-unionist workers realise are not fundamentally aimed to alter the power structure of Orange patronage.

Taken as a whole such a set of events, if they are not actively addressed with a strategy and tactics to mobilise tens of thousands of anti-Unionist workers and their communities in the north, and the trade union and labour movement in the south, will inevitably create a deepening sense of retreat, isolation and demoralisation. The ritual response of the IRA armed struggle and its bombing campaign, by their sheer irrelevance to the concrete needs and tasks of building mass resistance, can only aid the process of demoralisation.

4 In 1974 the victorious loyalist strike was a major defeat for the anti-Unionist masses all over Ireland not for the reason that the imperialist-engineered Sunningdale was scrapped but because throughout the whole period of growing loyalist mobilisation, involving bombing and assassinations of anti-Unionists, the minority population remained wholly passive spectators as the political balance of forces moved inexorably against them. Sinn Fein and the IRA had nothing to offer the masses in the way of a programme or strategy that could set in motion real forces within the minority and in the south, forces that could begin to challenge the whole reactionary drift of events towards re-consolidating the Six County prison-house of the anti-Unionists. The period of retreat experienced by the minority, and in particular the Republican Movement, was directly the outcome of the bankruptcy of republican politics and methods which sees the place, in the anti-imperialist struggle, of the aroused anti-Unionist and working class masses, as one of mere auxiliaries to the armed conflict of a few hundred guerrillas.

It took the heroic struggle and sacrifice of the H-Block prisoners for the republicans to even reluctantly admit a role for any kind of mass struggle. Even then it was a disastrous case of mobilisation under the banner of petty-bourgeois humanitarianism, a form of 'popular front' which rallied the working class masses only within the stunted limits on action and goals that were dictated by acceptability to middle class and ecclesiastical nationalists. It therefore resisted, tooth and nail, every attempt to put to the centre the fight for workers' action as the key to real victory over Thatcher and Haughey.

Today the republican response to the present moves of loyalism and imperialism has indeed changed - but for the worse. Adams and Morrisson, the 'left wing' leaders of S.F., in the wake of the Unionist MPs' resignations from Westminster, called for a pan-nationalist pact with the SDLP, the architects and defenders (in the coming elections) of the Anglo-Irish deal which Adams himself described as "the copperfastening of partition". SF's leaders have been only too eager to claim, without a shred of embarrassment or a note of explanation to their followers, that this 'pact' would involve SF and the SDLP "putting aside their own party policies in the interest of the anti-Unionist masses".

This blatant piece of opportunism, in the time honoured political tradition of simple appeals to sectarian community consciousness, starkly underlines how much SF really has in common with parties of the bourgeoisie whose leaders also remain unaccountable to their party conferences. Adams certainly had no mandate for such a shoddy manoeuvre and it will be a test of the 'socialist' and radical feminist currents in SF to see how far they go with him in this.

The SDLP is already set to benefit from the Accord in its propaganda because it has gained the acknowledgement, in a formal international agreement, of the existence of whole areas of legitimate grievance acutely felt by the anti-Unionist population; and the agreement - however cynically - officially promises steps towards 'reform'. Hume, the SDLP and Fitzgerald have only been able



to represent these promises as a genuine movement forward because the republican movement has never attempted to build campaigns of mass direct action - with the partial exception of the squandered H-Block struggle - for demands which deal sharply

5 with the living issues of repression and discrimination. Parliamentary manoeuvring and diplomacy towards the SDLP are a mockery of what is needed to expose the empty rhetoric of these charlatans.



Photo: Derek Speirs/Report. Loyalist youth at Belfast demo against Anglo-Irish deal.

## FOR UNITED FRONT ACTION AGAINST REPRESSION!

In the terms of the new Accord Thatcher and the Dublin Coalition are openly embarking upon stepped-up nationwide repression and collaboration between their armies and police forces, but the full implementation of such measures is unlikely until after the January Six-County elections for 15 parliamentary seats resigned by Unionists, so as not to undercut the SDLP's chances of registering gains in nationalist support. Repression, however, will be a key factor in Thatcher's plan to cajole the Loyalists into power sharing in a devolved Six County government.

This stark threat makes all the more urgent the need for a united front, throughout the country, of republican, socialist and working class forces against repression, against collaboration with imperialism and in defence of anti-imperialist prisoners, north and south. The elementary defensive needs of the northern minority and of all those openly opposed to British imperialism makes such joint action obligatory. It can be most effectively started through a democratic national conference open to all organisations and militants prepared to struggle. Such a conference must set out an agreed platform of concrete goals around which democratic action councils can be initiated in each town by local activists from the participating groups. The best energies of the best militants cannot be guaranteed, and the most effective forms of struggle cannot be developed, unless

such a fighting campaign guarantees the fullest freedom of debate and the right of each group to openly uphold its own political banner while pursuing the agreed action goals.

While such a campaign must seek to mobilise action around all the most blatant, the sharpest and the most immediate acts of repression, it can only do so flexibly if it spells out in advance an explicit position on all the key issues. We believe its platform should include the following.

1. Defend anti-imperialist political prisoners and oppose strip searching, north and south.
2. Fight to disarm and disband the U.D.R. and to abolish all repressive legislation and emergency powers, including Dublin's political censorship law - Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act. For solidarity with all victims and for defiance and obstruction of these laws wherever possible.
3. Abolish the juryless Diplock Courts in the north and Special Criminal courts in the south. Force the British to abandon all "supergrass" trials.
4. Fight collaboration by the southern Garda, Army, judges and courts. End extradition and extra-territorial courts. No the the European "Convention for the Prevention of Terrorism"!



## MAKE SINN FEIN ACT NOW!

Sinn Fein's whole method, however, poses a major obstacle to achieving such joint action. Its fetishism of the Armalite, combined now with electoral opportunism, results in turning its back again and again on the vital need for, and all the concrete opportunities to build, mass action against repression. Unless FORCED into action, as by the hunger strikers, Sinn Fein simply jogs along in a token way with the many scattered and disjointed 'one-issue' protest campaigns which arise out of the conflict with British imperialism.

There are many in Sinn Fein who refuse to fully recognise this political reality about their movement but who nevertheless instinctively recognise the urgent need for coherent united action. Thus at the November Ard-Fheis of Sinn Fein a motion was debated calling for an open conference... "with a view to establish a broad-based campaign in defence of the rights of Irish political prisoners and to bring unity and cohesion to the many worthy campaigns presently being waged". It was, however, defeated. Notwithstanding this, we call on all in Sinn Fein, and especially those who claim to stand for socialist principles, all who sense the sharpened need to mobilise sharp, cohesive mass action on behalf of the prisoners, and against repression and collaboration, to fight to make Sinn Fein convene an open conference such as outlined above.

## WORKING CLASS ACTION IS CENTRAL

The rank and file of the organised trade union movement must be won to the struggle against repression as the best foundation for effective organisation and action. Workplace and union action groups must be created to bring the organised industrial power of workers into the lead of the struggle.

The weak position of Six-County workers in industry and in the unions in no way excuses any back-turning on their potential for forceful ACTION as organised workers. Failure to fight for such action means reliance on merely moral protest campaigns, of the kind to which the republican class-alliance is wedded. At the same time, without mobilising the action of growing sections of the all-Ireland working class movement, no struggle relying on the Six-County anti-Unionists alone can guarantee lasting gains against British imperialism.

Therefore militants, even if only a small minority of them to begin with, must be won to actively take up in the south the fight among rank and file workers and in the union organisations for solidarity action against all forms of repression and to defend anti-imperialist fighters. The conditions for winning the necessary support in the southern trade unions are extremely unfavourable, however. Communists have another task, therefore - to develop tactics towards the majority of southern workers.

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Communists need to work to bring the broader sections of worker to realise, in struggle, how poisonous, false and anti-working class are the policies, methods and records of the existing leaderships and bureaucrats in the workers' movement in relation to Northern Ireland - whether Labour or Stalinists (CPI and Workers Party). Under the pretence of calling for "democratic reform" of the inherently sectarian and irreformable Six-County statelet these misleaders block every attempt to mobilise workers in any common action involving the Republican Movement or for any goal that might explicitly defend Republicans, whether interned or tortured or framed as criminals. They have assiduously helped the bourgeoisie to sow poison and prejudice among workers against all who struggle against the tyranny of the sectarian northern state.

But even while the bureaucratic hold of such reactionary leaders and their propaganda continue to be an obstacle among large sections of workers in the south, workers' sympathies can be appealed to on the substantial and concrete issues of the oppression to which the northern state subjects their class brothers and sisters in every catholic community from the Border to the sea. The evidence must be hammered home to southern workers of the continuing systematic discrimination, especially in employment, but also in most other aspects of social life. It is powerful evidence. Indeed, it is this which forms the basis in the life-experience of the anti-Unionist minority for their ongoing state of open revolt against all institutions of rule in Northern Ireland. The necessary response to it, the necessary and minimum DEMOCRATIC first response to such oppression, has to be a programme of elementary concrete demands for equality, especially in hiring workers. Such an elementary democratic response must also fight for POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION in favour of workers from the catholic communities to establish rough proportional equality.

## REFORMS AND THE NORTHERN STATE

Our understanding of the sectarian state, and its brutal reaction to the middle-class-led struggle for catholic equality that developed in 1967-9, leads us to warn that the Six County state cannot be reformed without its existence as a state being ended. From that belief, which is in some form shared also by Irish republicanism, we in no way draw the conclusion drawn by Sinn Fein, that therefore it is fruitless to struggle for the necessary concrete reforms such as equality in employment. As a group who have championed joint action in solidarity with the republican-led struggle of the anti-Unionists, from the 1973 Political Hostages Release Committee until today,

the IWG has nevertheless openly, sharply and consistently criticised the Republicans' whole method of waging a purely 'physical force' struggle instead of seeing armed action as one tactical part of a method that mobilises the masses around the most sharply felt concrete issues. 'Election clinics' and the paraphernalia of local council clientilism are a fake pretence of a 'turn to politics'. Revolutionary politics is nothing if it does not seek to mobilise real class forces.



Any failure to mobilise against discrimination, especially in jobs, will leave Fitzgerald, Hume and Thatcher unchallenged while THEY obscenely claim to be about the business of ending the oppression, "the alienation", of the northern nationalists! Yet when Shorts in Belfast won a large US airforce contract in March 1983 they did little or nothing to implement pledges, won by solidarity movements in the US, to bring more catholics into its 6,500 strong, 95% protestant workforce. (It's the north's largest private company). In reneging, it was able to rely on clear signals from Fitzgerald and Labour's Spring during soundings with the Dublin government who also stayed silent while the Republic's state airline chiefs publicly claimed that Shorts' employment practices were acceptable. Both of these foul hypocrites attacked the 'Mac Bride principles' which attempted to set down anti-discrimination guidelines for US firms intending to invest in the Six Counties, and according to the Belfast magazine, Fortnight, Fitzgerald "also said he would oppose campaigns against even those firms which refuse to stop discriminating in their hiring practices, because of the economic and social destabilisation which would occur if they left Northern Ireland" (18/11/84).

#### UNIONS PRESERVE DIVISIONS

On the other hand, any inch gained for a fight for equal opportunity and positive discrimination for catholics will strike a strategic blow at the whole historic mould of the trade union and labour bureaucracy throughout the island. For, the powerful hold of this politically feckless caste, ever since the 1918 refusal of the Congress-Labour Party to fight the general elections, leading to collaboration with both Orange and Green toryism, has been based on helping to stabilise Partition and the triple division of the class.

Any proposal that the unions fight for positive discrimination in northern employment raises sharp questions about the right of all to a job. Those questions cannot be answered by a bureaucracy which in the present recession alone has negotiated in country-wide unemployment from 140,000 to 400,000, with catholics being hit much worse than protestants in the north. Such questions can only be answered by a fight for all the necessary measures to win shorter hours and worksharing without loss of income, schemes of useful public works and services at union rates of pay etc. Communists must seek to equip militants, in action, with such a programme as the best answer to protestant reaction.

#### IMPERIALISM AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE

Simultaneously, revolutionaries must fight to win militants to the clearest understanding of the all-pervasive connections between the imperialised nature of the country as a whole and all the issues faced in struggle by the southern working

7 class. In the class struggle communists must show how social underdevelopment, austerity policies and super-taxation flow from dependence on and debt to British and US led imperialism. They must show how women's oppression is specially deep in a nation partitioned by British imperialism into two backward church-dominated states. They must show how Partition helps maintain the outright dominance of southern politics by two rival bourgeois parties. Britain and the US seek to draw Ireland into NATO and back the southern Irish state in trampling on popular sympathy for other oppressed peoples, notably S.Africa, Central America, Philippines etc. Also, when repressive laws and state coercion are used against workers and their communities, communists must draw the links with pro-imperialist anti-Republican repression, all aimed at stabilising bourgeois rule.

There is no economic basis for such 'stability', and no possibility of any systematic economic development in this imperialised country in the ever deepening economic crisis of world capitalism. Any temporary hike in capitalist profitability can only be at the further expense of working class conditions of living. The lying promises of the bosses about sacrifices now to ensure rosy times ahead will be used time and again, also by the union leaders, to postpone any fight for democratic equality now for anti-Unionist workers in the north. Communists must give no quarter whatever to such a betrayal.

If in practice significant sections of protestant workers cannot yet be won to fight for the democratic equality of their catholic brothers and sisters, the trade union bureaucrats must not be allowed to hold back this fight which for 60 years it has refused to take up. Only by breaking the bureaucracy as an obstacle and independently continuing this struggle, as ONE PART of an action programme against capitalism and imperialism, can the road be opened to a genuine solution to the oppression of the anti-Unionists in a secular all-Ireland Workers Republic fighting for international socialism.

\* In the January by-elections, in solidarity with the anti-Unionist struggle led by the Republican Movement, and not yet being able to stand our own candidates, we call for a vote ONLY for the candidates of Sinn Fein, to whom we nevertheless continue our open POLITICAL opposition.

\* For united-front action of workers, socialists and republicans against repression North and South!

\* For working class direct action as the central indispensable means to take the struggle forward!

\* Force the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to fight for equal opportunity and positive discrimination for anti-Unionist workers in the North.

\* The unions must be won to FORCE Labour to block ratification of the European "anti-terrorist" convention and block renewal of the section-31 broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein. The NUJ must strike for repeal of Section 31! Force Labour out of Coalition now!



# STRIKE LESSONS — INJUNCTIONS AT U.C.D.

The University College Dublin strike by cleaners against redundancy, threatened under the cheap-labour scheme of privatising cleaning to outside contractors, was heroic in its endurance against union bureaucrats and the bosses. UCD bosses called in the police to enforce court injunctions against the mass pickets. The Socialist Workers Movement were to the fore among those from the left who walked the picket lines. A leading SWM member and t.v. personality Eamonn McCann was personally enjoined by UCD and the courts. The fact that he agreed to abide by the injunction, however, was never explained by the SWM in their many articles on the strike. It was reported as an injunction which he personally undertook to abide by, but even if it were an injunction in which he was just one of many, the incident still deserved explanation by SWM.

What is not excusable, however, was McCann's undertaking not to enter the campus at all. As a leading speaker for the SWM at the gates of the

college, as everywhere else, he should have stood out absolutely, at least for his right to enter the campus for meetings, a right no-one should surrender. Thus he publicly accepted denial of his right to speak even to SWM public meetings in the campus. SWM cannot stand over such an action, so it prefers to ignore it in its reportage, despite its prominence in the bourgeois media.

For a group calling itself revolutionary, and which has always called on workers to defy injunctions, this was shameful. SWM replied to an IWG member that they are not in the business of making martyrs. That is, not until the workers do so first? As with so much of their "practical action", SWM always sees the "real struggle" as only existing in the future when they have built their "party" - but on what political foundations, and on what principles?

The SWM surrender on this issue is but one more example of the method of "centrism", strong on revolutionary phrases but unwilling to fight on a principled basis and appeal for socialist, trade union and student solidarity even when OBLIGED to defend a principle.

## DUNNES STRIKE BETRAYED

(This item is continued from page 32.)

official who cravenly sold out the Dunne's strikers after 18 months picketing. Eleven IDATU workers struck as a result of their action to further an official union policy resolution to black S.African trade. Their demand was quickly reduced by the union to the pathetic plea for the "right of conscience" of individual workers not to have to handle S.African goods.

IDATU made no attempt to bring out other Dunne's workers nor to get wider trade union action to impose embargoes on S.African goods. When a militant in another store in Crumlin refused to handle goods and was sacked, management canvassed employees not to act in solidarity. Without any similar canvass by the union, a ballot was taken and found against solidarity action for the worker, who remained sacked, on strike pay. Worse, the original strikers were NOT ASKED to address the Crumlin workers, only three miles up the road, yet they could be flown to S.Africa, to New York for publicity, and to London to be photographed with Bishop Tutu of the UDF!

Given the massive public sympathy for the strikers there was a real opportunity to make it the starting point for an independent working class campaign of direct action against Apartheid. But no meeting to this end was ever convened IN 18 MONTHS! Militant Tendency, who recruited to Labour Youth from among Dunne's workers and the strikers, are most culpable. Just as their co-thinkers in S.Africa believe the ANC will lead the workers to power, so also, tragically, they imagine that solidarity work here is best left to the middle-class-led Anti-Apartheid Movement! (Yet the AAM took contemptible sectarian action to prevent Militant sympathiser, brother Sejake, a S.African trade unionist, from addressing Derry Trades Council!)

Dependent on solidarity of Church agencies and limited by their Union leaders, the strikers declined an IWG offer to help them convene the left to build a solidarity campaign in Dec. 1984. While the SWM was calling for the Union to set up a solidarity group IWG was calling on SWM to join in independently convening a support group with the perspective of building wider working class action against Apartheid. A support group was then organised by dedicated activists from the telephone exchanges. IDATU insisted on absolute control of it, while often leaving it in the wilderness. It was never allowed to involve the strikers directly.

The IWG, SWM and anarchist WSM, fought for simple democratic procedure in this committee but were voted down, 14 to 8, by activists from LWR, PD, Sinn Fein, the CP, AAM etc. As a result it could not draw in forces. What it might have done on a permanent basis was only achieved for two weeks when this weak committee stopped all supplies to the store, with round-the-clock pickets. Tragically, this elementary work had not been organised by the bureaucrats of IDATU and other unions whose members continued to deliver to the store in defiance of the Congress All-Out Picket!

Mitchell made it plain in September in the press that he wanted the workers to give in to Dunne, go back, but claim a "moral victory" for having stayed out so long! In December the Government said that in March '86 it MIGHT curtail imports of fruit from S.Africa, IF it were proven that PRISONERS were used in its production - a proviso in the international GATT rules! Mitchell seized on this, and railroaded the strikers into reluctantly removing their pickets immediately, but without getting their jobs back - a 'moratorium' until March to allow the Government to carry out its calculated deception of all those who saw in the Dunne's strikers a bold starting point in the fight against Apartheid.

We call on the strikers, the left groups and all militants around the strike to build an independent fighting campaign NOW, beginning by putting the pickets back on Dunne's until he removes S.African goods, and gives the strikers back their jobs with all lost pay!



# Abortion Rights ~ Retreating Front

9

October 12th witnessed another retreat away from ever fighting in Ireland for the right of women to choose abortion, when the Defend-the-Clinics campaign banned from its manifesto the mere mention of women's aspiration for Irish abortion facilities. In doing so it was aided principally by the centrist Peoples Democracy group (a claimant to Trotskyism and affiliate of the international USFI current).

Two years previously, the Right won their constitutional amendment campaign to prevent any proposed Bill from ever conceding any form of abortion rights. It was a redundant amendment in terms of legal prohibitions on abortion, because the anti-abortion 1861 Act remained intact, and also because there was no challenge from any significant fighting movement for abortion rights. However, the fact of Irish women having as many abortions, outside the jurisdiction as women in any other country in Europe, was anathematised and targeted by the Right as mass murder that had to be stopped. The referendum campaign therefore was an ideological and organisational mobilisation of these forces.

In confronting the referendum, the left, the liberals, Fine Gael youth and the non-catholic churches combined to call for a vote against. In that campaign the centrist left groups, especially PD and its mirror image - the LWR, insisted on an alliance not simply for common action but for the least common denominator of propaganda acceptable to the protestant clergy, abandoning the elementary political independence which, for Trotskyists, is an essential condition of principled joint action with other political forces. That propaganda bloc constantly argued in public that the existing anti-abortion law was strong enough(!), that the real issue was one of "normal pluralist democratic life" being assaulted by catholic dictatorship.

As for the activists in the campaign, they were a section of women and of the left who at the very least were fully sympathetic with de-criminalising abortion, even if therapeutic abortion was as much as they were yet prepared to accept in place of the 1861 Act. When the activists were re-assembled in the period afterwards, for a conference to debate where to go, it fell into an immediate shambles - on the surface because the LWR chairperson abandoned the democratically prepared agenda of motions - but fundamentally because the Anti-Amendment Campaign had not welded any nucleus of activists around any elements whatever of a concrete perspective going beyond the coat-tails of the protestant bishops.

Nothing was built, therefore, out of that whole year's experience. It awaited another initiative from the RIGHT to rouse a defensive response from the previous remnants. Early in 1985 the most noxious core of this religious-fanatical lobby, SPUC, having tired of harrassing visitors to Dublin pregnancy counselling services, sent in dummy clients on false pretences to procure evidence of abortion referrals to Britain. This they

followed up with court action to shut down the clinics involved, citing the new constitutional amendment as a basis.

Again, the initiative in rallying around the clinics came from the "far left". A small defence campaign adopted a platform of defence of the clinics, aiming to defend also "The right to refer women to jurisdictions where abortion is legal until such time as these services are available in Ireland".

Among the 80 activists assembled for the Oct. 1985 conference, PD acted as cat's paw for this conservative lobby. PD's leader, Ann Speed, spearheaded the fight to delete the existing token reference to the future possibility of Irish abortion facilities.

While this formulation may have satisfied the centrists of the Socialist Workers Movement, registering their belief that abortion must eventually be provided, it in no way committed the committee to campaign to change the present law. For at least one of the privately run clinics, however, it was too provocative an aim to be associated with, and they said so publicly. Respectable opinion had to be won to generate the climate and the financial conditions for a legal victory over SPUC - from a judiciary that had upheld the legal ban on homosexuality because it offended the predominant "christian ethos"!

The appeal for caution - coming from a self-styled revolutionary group - inevitably overcame any instinct on the part of individual feminists to stand over the previous formulation, which though non-committal, had at least been a token effort to break out of the crippling pursuit of "respectability" that had limited them since the Anti-Amendment campaign.

The IWG's motion, supported by SWM, for the group to publicly commit itself to build on the immediate defence issue and go on to campaign for decriminalisation of abortion, was therefore a particular object of attack by the PD. The IWG proposal, as we also put it to AAC activists two years previously, was as this: Over 50,000 women in Ireland have had abortions and, together with vast sections of women in general, they represent a massive potential sympathy for the slogan of decriminalising abortion. Secondly, virtually all those actually prepared to struggle against the Amendment and to defend the Clinics, would equally campaign for decriminalisation, given a lead. Thirdly, a common fight to scrap the 1861 Act's prohibition would leave open the question of what should replace it - whether limited therapeutic abortion facilities or abortion on demand - and this could be debated out in parallel with the struggle. In this regard the IWG has publicly stood out for abortion on demand since its first manifesto in 1976 and continues to argue for that goal. And fourthly, and most important, the REAL issue raised by the Referendum and the SPUC



onslaught on the Clinics IS the criminalisation of women having abortions and all who assist them. It was no use before, and it is no defence now, to publicly pretend otherwise.

If activists are only to be episodically dragged out, to court middle class support for the defence of an ever-retreating front, they will understandably drift, demoralised, out of all activity. The false logic of the PD pivots on courting the kind of allies whom they believe would be offended by association with a campaign intent on going on to fight for decriminalisation!

In their pamphlet, deceptively entitled "World wide: women fight for the right to choose", PD tells us "We must not counterpose or confuse long-term goals with short term priorities", and "While we understand that at a time when the women's movement is under attack, many feel the pressure to uphold at all times the principle of the Right to Choose. However, choosing the correct strategy in order to win must be our priority. To win we need allies and to make allies we need to show that we can win this particular struggle" (p.5). Therefore, fight it legally on SPUC's terms, with no mention of the substance of the issue, and no attempt to win militants to create a basis for ongoing struggle.

This cowardly recipe of PD's has been tried and found to be disastrous in every previous campaign - contraception, and the Amendment to name but two. This time, tragically it has set the already weak clinic defence campaign on a course towards demoralisation and shipwreck.

PD's standard guise for opportunism is to limit campaigns to the immediate "single issue". So fetishised is this method that they even rowed in against the IWG motion for the campaign to broaden out its statement of aims to commit it in the future to re-build the fight for free contraception on demand - which surely could not possibly offend even their fancied middle-class "allies"! The motion was carried by 17 votes to 14, but declared lost when, with the prominent support of bureaucracy is well served by this and many even worse anti-democratic devices aimed at pitting every shred of inertia and conservatism against those willing to fight. But for a self-proclaimed leader of Irish "trotskyism" to publicly use such a device in a political campaign is to drag the fighting tradition of Trotsky in the mire.

The defence of the clinics remains a duty for all socialists and fighters for women's liberation, whatever the fortunes of the remnants of this campaign.

The opportunism witnessed in the clinics campaign is even less excusable now in terms of social climate than in 1978 when the PD and SWM attempted, in vain, to stop the issue of abortion from reaching the agenda of the Socialist Labour Party Conference, where an IWG motion was overwhelmingly carried (by 74 to 47) to commit that fledgling party to the slogan of "abortion on demand". By contrast, in 1985, under the impact of a large and increasing annual abortion rate, and because the Right have forcibly posed the issue, even the left petty-bourgeois Sinn Fein party has voted at its Ard-Fheis to uphold "a woman's right to choose". The "left" leadership did not want the motion taken because they feared a sharp backlash not least from the catholic nationalist petty-bourgeoisie in whom their movement is historically and politically rooted. The resolution was carried by 78 to 73. The majority victory was democratically accepted by the platform (comrade Speed take note!) despite half of the delegates already having left.

Straightaway the Coalition's minister for "justice", Noonan, obscenely baited the Republican Movement with the charge that they had "extended the range of legitimate targets to include unborn babies". However much SF was, and is, intent on forgetting their "right to choose" policy (just like the SLP leaders and its centrist tendencies in 1978), Sinn Fein's leaders could not at that moment disown the Ard Fheis resolution. However, instead of defending the secular democratic content of their new position, SF replied that their struggle was for a new "civilisation" to replace the existing society that drove women to have abortions, a position indistinguishable from liberal catholic idealism. This is as much as was permitted by their act of balancing between the young urban leftward-leaning membership and their more permanent conservative base. (Similarly the Derry branch of SF, who had moved the motion, when attacked by the Derry Journal, retreated and claimed that the right to choose only referred to therapeutic abortion!)

For, the Republican movement still has lodged centrally within it, a nationalist catholicism that is anything but liberal. As recently as the abortion referendum campaign it was seen in extremis when some local elements within Sinn Fein openly argued that abortion (and even contraception) were evil means of genocide by British imperialism.

Only by turning outwards in struggle for their programmatic gains, in defiance of their own leaders if necessary, can Sinn Fein campaigners for women's liberation give real meaning to their conference victory. And only by fighting to link immediate issues to the major objective needs of women can permanent gains be made towards building a mass fighting women's movement that, step by step, can grow to take up the whole programme of action for their complete liberation - a movement based on and led by the working class, and coming under the lead of revolutionary communist politics, for the goal of the Workers Republic.



# *James Connolly's Legacy Part 5*

## CONNOLLY AND WOMEN'S LIBERATION

While no discussion of the struggle for women's emancipation in Ireland would seem complete without some quotation from James Connolly's work, yet rarely has any attempt been made to assess his contribution and thought on the question as a whole. Attempts have been made to mould his image after Lenin, as by the Reeves (in 'Connolly in the United States'), or to enlist his support in differentiating between socialists and feminists. But as with religion, there are profound weaknesses in his analysis which have enabled opposite conclusions to be drawn from him.

That Connolly, the supporter of women's rights, was also opposed to divorce is only the most obvious feature of the contradictions in his thought. It is therefore necessary and instructive to attempt a more rounded appreciation of what he has left us as his theoretical and political legacy on the question. In the process of doing this it will be possible to clarify aspects of the Marxist tradition and the tasks of socialists in fighting for a consistent socialist programme, strategy and tactics. All too often, opportunities to lay the foundation for a socialist women's movement have been squandered by the 'far left' in Ireland as elsewhere. This results either from economism - the limitation of perspectives to the immediate trade union struggles - or adaptation to feminism, which is blind to the fundamental class antagonisms that lie at the basis of capitalism and the class basis of women's oppression. Both of these perspectives divert from the possibility of building a movement with roots among working class women, the condition for linking immediate struggles to the complete emancipation of women, through the overthrow of capitalism.

### MARXIST WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Connolly's early years of socialist activity in the 1890s coincide with the period in which the Marxist theoretical understanding of women's oppression began to be translated into practice. Its foundations had been elaborated in Engels' 'Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State' (1884), Bebel's 'Women and Socialism' and other writings. By the time Connolly was active on the Scottish left the practical, organisational and political development of socialist work among women had begun. The centre of activity was

Germany, where Clara Zetkin had founded the paper 'Die Gleichheit' (Equality). In Austria also the work had begun with the publication of 'Arbeiterinnenzeitung' (Working Women's Journal) under the editorship of Louise Kautsky with contributions in 1892 from Eleanor Marx and Laura Lafargue (Marx's daughters, both).

This essentially continental development only emerged with the maturing of the socialist movement and the defeat of backward traditions, most significantly in Germany. The working class tradition of Lassalle's followers during the 1860s and 1870s was heavily male-dominated and opposed both the entry of women into capitalist production and also women's suffrage rights. Marx and Engels had fought such trends in the years of the First International (1864-72) and in their orientation to the growth of mass organisation in Germany in the 1870s, e.g. in the 'Critique of the Gotha Programme'. The classic publications of Engels and Bebel have to be seen against this background. The recognition that women were entering on the world of wage slavery - and were there to stay - did not come about automatically. This was often masked by concern over the appalling conditions under which women (and children) were sucked into industrial production in the interests of capital accumulation. Eleanor Marx, in creatively developing the ideas of Marx, Engels, and Bebel, had to reckon with the tendency towards conservatism of the trade unions which expressed itself in the exclusion and ghettoising of women workers into separate unions. This tendency, which persisted in the formation of the New Unions of unskilled workers, echoed the previous male craft exclusiveness of the older unions. She expressed this in one of her contributions to the Austrian Working Women's Journal:

"The new Union of women cigarmakers, which I mentioned in my last letter, was founded about three years ago. Its members do not belong to the men's union, although the two unions work together. To the outsider it seems deplorable that the two unions do not merge, albeit working together. The reason adduced by the men against amalgamation is that the women almost always view their work as a temporary thing and regard marriage as their real TRAIL, one that frees them from the need to earn their own living. Of course, in the vast majority of cases marriage does not reduce the woman's work but doubles it,



since she not only works for wages but also has to do hard unpaid 'household' labour into the unholy bargain. In spite of all this, the women unfortunately do look on their work as temporary all too often, and defend this attitude of the men, who regard their wage-labour as 'lifelong' and are therefore much more eager to improve the conditions they work under. (May 1892, letter concerning an all-women's union.) 12

It was in a period of struggle to organise the mass of the working class in Britain and in Europe generally, that the fight for equality at work, equal pay for women, was taken up by Eleanor.

Politically, the development of a socialist programme for women was centred in German-speaking countries. So developed was the German Socialist Women's movement that the Erfurt Congress of 1891 passed the following resolution on the Franchise, calling for:

"Universal equal and direct suffrage, with secret ballot, for all citizens of the Reich over 20 years of age without distinction of sex." (Thonessen: *The Emancipation of Women; the rise and decline of the women's movement in German Social Democracy 1863-1933*, Pluto Press, 1973).

This position was far in advance of what the English Suffragists were demanding up to the first world war as they did not agitate against the property qualification. Moreover, the foundation of *Die Gleichheit* in 1891 was just the beginning. By the time of the 1913 lockout in Dublin, *Die Gleichheit* was selling 112,000 copies in Germany and its role in recruiting and organising proletarian women was inestimable. It is notable also that during that war, in spite of the capitulation of the majority of the German Social-democratic Party to the imperialist war effort, *Die Gleichheit* and Zetkin were on the left of the party, proletarian anti-militarists. This, again, contrasts with the disintegration of the bourgeois suffragettes in Britain and Ireland in the face of the same events.

#### CONNOLLY'S ISOLATION

We refer to these developments in order to situate our evaluation of Connolly in its proper context. While this remarkable movement was on the rise in Germany and Austria, he was variously in Scotland (1889-96), Ireland (1896-1903) and America (1903-10) before returning finally to Ireland. He would have been largely cut off from what was going on in Germany and Austria. His eventual confrontation with Bebel's book, "Women and Socialism", would take place only in 1904 when the American Marxist Daniel De Leon translated it into English and published it in the SLP paper for the first time - although it had seen many editions over the previous 20 years. By that time the book had become a staple part of Marxist literature and an integral part of the traditions of continental Marxist women.

Connolly, alas, like the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) in general in Britain, was very much outside that whole tradition. To this must be added the fact that the SDF had only a tenuous grasp of the science of Marxism, relying on a



Eleanor Marx - fought for women's right to work.

limited number of basic texts - the Communist Manifesto, Capital Volume I, and 'Wage Labour and Capital', plus 'Wages Prices & Profits' which Eleanor prepared for publication in the 1890s. How far out of touch the SDF was is revealed in the attitudes which prevailed amongst its leaders.

Engels had, in 1894, referred to how they had reduced the Marxist method to a hardened and inflexible dogma. When we consider the views of Harry Hyndman and Belfort Bax on the question of women's emancipation we can begin to realise how much Connolly's healthy impulses enabled him to rise above his peers.

Hyndman, founder of the SDF which helped to train Connolly, in a letter to one of his acquaintances in 1904, wrote that women who advocated their own emancipation as a "sex question" ought to be sent to an island by themselves. Bax's views were even more woeful. He was against extending the franchise to women and belonged to the "Anti-Suffrage league". This chauvinist club apparently discoursed on the "inferiority" of women and her "sex-privileges". He continued his reactionary views as late as 1909. (See Tsuzuki - Hyndman and British Socialism p.190)

#### MONTEFIORI MAKES THE LINK

In spite of such views, the SDF, under pressure of events, did have to make some accommodation to the struggle for women's suffrage and the trade unionisation of unskilled women workers. An important figure in turning its attention towards the socialist women's tradition was Dora Montefiori. In the beginning of the 1900s she worked along with the Pankhursts' Women's Social & Political Union, but soon developed criticisms of the WSPU on class lines under the influence of the continental socialist women's movement. The WSPU confined its demands strictly to the extension of the franchise to women within the existing property qualification. She, to her credit, irritated Hyndman greatly - he said she was worse than the 'imps' - the 'impossibilists' who had broken from



the SDF in 1903 to form the Socialist Labour Party 13 on the principle that it was impossible to get to socialism via Parliament. After being in the thick of agitation in 1905-7 alongside the WSPU, she attended the first International Socialist Women's Conference, held in Stuttgart in 1907. She did so as a delegate of the Adult Suffrage Society which she had joined earlier that year on the grounds that it was against any property qualification on votes for women. This brought Montefiori into direct contact with the continental movement. She developed her ideas in the light of this influence and in 1909 published a pamphlet called "The position of women in the Socialist Movement".

Montefiori is known in Irish socialist tradition for her role in the 1913 lockout when her effort to offer British accommodation to children of locked-out workers was sabotaged by Irish clerical backwoodsmen. The following quotation from her 1909 pamphlet very closely anticipates the words Connolly was to use down in "The Reconquest of Ireland" in the period 1912-14 and which are almost ritually quoted by Irish socialists:

"The working woman is more sweated, more despised, more downtrodden in the last resort than is the working man, because, though under capitalism, the working man is the wage slave, yet his wife is the slave of the slave."  
(Tsuzuki, p.191)

Connolly possibly read the pamphlet some time after his return to Ireland in 1910. At any rate it seems fair to suggest that Connolly's contact with the theory and practice of the Marxist socialist women's movement was very tenuous and late in its impact. In none of the countries in which he was active did he come into living contact with this movement. Hence, the developed political culture, tactics on union organisation, on relations with bourgeois and petit bourgeois feminist movements, on sexuality, marriage, divorce and democratic rights etc., largely passed him by. Before going on to examine the often unhappy nature of such contact as he did have with that tradition, it is worth stressing that this rich heritage, and its further development in the Bolshevik and early communist movement, remains largely unacknowledged by the Irish Marxist left today. The degeneration of Social Democracy, leading to its capitulation to the imperialist bourgeoisies in the first world war, banished this healthy movement and replaced it after the war with a vulgarised idea of 'women's issues', effectively a domesticated women's movement. The Stalinist degeneration of the young Comintern after 1922 put paid to the high hopes and real gains made through the work of Zetkin and Kollontai after the October Revolution.

It is in this historical context that the one major point of confrontation between Connolly and the revolutionary Marxist perspective on women's emancipation becomes especially important in getting the measure of Connolly's perspectives and of the tradition associated still with his name. We refer to the polemic Connolly was to wage in the united States against August Bebel's landmark text for Marxists, "Women and Socialism".

## HISTORICAL MATERIALISM AND THE FAMILY

Again, when touring this country in 1902, I met in Indianapolis an esteemed comrade who almost lost his temper with me because I expressed my belief in monogamous marriage, and because I said, as I still hold, that the tendency of civilization is towards its perfection and completion, instead of its destruction. My comrade's views, especially since the publication in "The People" of Bebel's "Women", are held by a very large number of members, but I hold, nevertheless that such works and such publications are an excrescence upon the movement. The abolition of the capitalist system will, undoubtedly, solve the economic side of the woman question, but it will solve this alone." (Connolly - "Wages, Marriage and the Church", in The People, 5 April 1904).

Thus Connolly opened his polemic against Bebel's classic work. He added in the same article that such a book could only be popular:

"because of its quasi-prurient revelations of the past and present degradation of womanhood, but I question if you can find in the whole world one woman who was led to socialism by it, but you can find hundreds who were repelled from studying socialism by judicious extracts from its pages".

Connolly's comments tellingly reveal the depth of his feeling on the issues raised by Bebel's book. His claims about the effects of Bebel's book seem a desperate grasping at straws when set against the reality that Bebel's book, along with Engels', was the staple socialist work on the question for at least tens of thousands of organised women in Europe. He cannot have been unaware of something of the stature it had been steadily acquiring for 20 years. The explanation for the depth and force of his reaction to the work was that it fundamentally and scientifically challenged precisely the kind of certainties of his personal psychology that are revealed in his polemic. For, Bebel had critically exposed all the prevailing ideology of the existing patterns of sexual life and the family as 'natural destiny'.

Probennummer.

# Die Gleichheit.

2. Jahrgang.

Zeitschrift für die Interessen der Arbeiterinnen.

Herausgegeben von Emma Ihrer in Berlin (West).

Die „Gleichheit“ erscheint alle 14 Tage einmal. Preis der Nummer 10 Pf., durch den Sub. bezogen beträgt der Abonnements-Preis vierteljährlich ohne Porto 35 Pf.; unter Anrechnung 5 Pf. Jahresabonnement bei langjährigem Bestehen 10 Pf.

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## An die Leser!

In dieser Nummer tritt „Die Gleichheit“ an die Stelle der vielen liebesverwandten Zeitschrift „Die Arbeiterin.“ Der „Die Arbeiterin“ bisher und unter schwierigen Verhältnissen am Werk gewesen, der kennt mit ihm auch das Programm, das sich „Die Gleichheit“ stellt, die prinzipielle Grundlage, auf der ihre Haltung fußt. Allen in Folge veränderter äußerer Umstände hoffen wir, den Wirkungsbereich des Blattes beträchtlich zu erweitern, und für die neu hinzukommenden Leser dürfen einige Worte der Erklärung

Personen ein Ende nimmt. In diesem Kampfe aber sind die ausgebeuteten politischen Rechte — die Arbeiterbewegung hat dies bewiesen — vorzüglich und unentbehrliche Waffen. Die wohlhabende Frau bedarf zu ihrer Emancipation, ihrer Befreiung aus der rechtlichen Gleichstellung mit dem Manne. Die Frau des Proletariats dagegen bleibt, auch wenn sie ihre rechtliche Gleichstellung mit dem Manne errungen, noch unfrei, abhängig vom Kapitalisten. Sie muß deshalb alle Bestrebungen unterstützen, welche darauf abzielen, die Macht der Kapitalisten-

Gleichheit (Equality) paper of

German working women's movement.



## BEBEL'S ANALYSIS

By carefully citing evidence of the profound changes that the family and sexual life have experienced throughout history, he established the economic, social and historical roots of the oppression of women:

"Conditions lasting through a long series of generations, finally grow into custom; heredity and education then cause such conditions to appear ... as 'natural'. (p.9)

"For the purposes of this work a cursory presentation of the relations between the sexes, since primitive society, is of special importance (because) seeing that these relations have materially changed in the previous course of development, and that the changes have taken place in even step with the existing systems of production, on the one hand, and on the distribution of the product of labour, on the other, it is natural and goes without saying that along with further changes and revolutions in the system of production and distribution, the relations between the sexes are bound to change again. Nothing is "eternal" either in nature or in human life; eternal only is change and interchange". (Bebel, p.10)

Today it is easy to fault Bebel on many points of detail and to see changes that he, despite blowing away many intellectual cobwebs of bourgeois society, failed to envisage. But the key point that keeps his work astonishingly fresh is the way in which he linked the evolution of property relations to the available data on relations between the sexes and really did show just how much variety has existed. In so doing, Bebel was fleshing out the basic elements sketched by Marx and Engels in various writings. In broad historical terms, Bebel was wholly consistent with Engels in relating the emergence of monogamous marriage to the development of private property. Though discursive in form, the great merit of the book was its frank exposure of the layers of cant and hypocrisy which sanctified the contemporary civil, political and intellectual denial of women's existence. The bourgeois form of marriage and the hypocritical concepts of adultery and illegitimacy that flow from it, have their roots in the fact that for the property owning class of capitalism marriage acts as a means of securing the transmission of private property and wealth to legitimate heirs. As such it runs contrary to the notion of marriage based on voluntary love and is hostile to the legislation of divorce. The main burden of this social function of marriage is borne by women who, in the property owning class, are dependent on the property of their husbands. Furthermore,

"under pressure of social conditions it is forced even upon those who have nothing to bequeath: it becomes a social law, the violation of which the state punishes by imprisoning for a term of years the men or women who live in adultery and who have been divorced" (p.246).

Thus the proletarian family under capitalism bears the form of the bourgeois family - but only as an impediment. However, the absence of property and the emergence of women into socialised capitalist production on a large scale outside the home

14 pose the question of the socialisation of domestic toil. Cooperation, albeit under capitalist production, flies in the face of the privatised family and sexual world of bourgeois monogamy. Of course, working class men and women may well choose a monogamous relationship. In a future socialist society this may also be the case. If this does turn out to be the case under socialism and communism then it will be so as a result of choice and not, as it is under capitalism, as a consequence of the existence of private property and the use of the family as the mechanism whereby men effectively take possession of women to ensure the transmission of wealth:

"In future society there is nothing to bequeath, unless the domestic equipment and personal inventory be regarded as inheritance: the modern form of marriage is thus devoid of foundation and collapses... Woman is accordingly free, and her children, where she has any, do not impair her freedom: they can only fill all the fuller the cup of her enjoyment and her pleasure in life." (Bebel, p346-7).



August Bebel - Author of *Women and Socialism*

## CONNOLLY'S REACTION

It is clear from the tone of Connolly's attack on Bebel's book that he was reacting with all the indignation of someone whose sense of 'decency' and 'morality' had been deeply offended. He found it impossible to concede that Bebel's book was inspired by scientific interest and scientific socialist interest in particular. Railing against Bebel he wrote:

"I have used the word 'pruriency'. Let me make it stronger and say indecency, and explain what I mean by indecency in this respect. I consider that whosoever tells of the sexual act needlessly or in any other manner, but as a scientist would speak of his investigations or a surgeon of his operations, is acting indecently." (The Connolly De Leon Controversy, p.30, Cork Workers Club edition).



Connolly regarded Bebel's suggestion that the "modern form of marriage collapses once its basis in private ownership of the means of

production goes" as grossly unscientific:

"He might as well say: 'The concentrated tool of production is the result of bourgeois property relations; in future society these relations will have disappeared, therefore the concentrated tool of production will collapse'" (p.30-31)

However, Connolly missed the essential point. In Bebel's terms the family would be free to evolve more 'naturally', i.e. free from the ties of property of a husband's income or wealth. Connolly referred to Morgan in an attempt to complete his refutation of Bebel:

"Bebel declares openly and avowedly that under socialism the modern monogamic marriage will collapse, and yet his work we are told is based upon that of Morgan, and Morgan declares as unreservedly his belief in the beauty and permanency of modern marriage" (p.31)

What Morgan actually wrote, however, in his major work "Ancient Society", was:

"When the fact is accepted that the family has passed through four successive forms and is now in a fifth, the question at once arises whether this form can be permanent in the future. The only answer that can be given is that it must advance as society advances, and change as society changes, even as it has done in the past. It is the creature of the social system and will reflect its culture. As the monogamian family has improved greatly since the commencement of civilization, and very sensibly in modern times, it is at least supposable that it is capable of still further improvement until the equality of the sexes is obtained. Should the monogamian family in the distant future fail to answer the requirements of society ... it is impossible to predict the nature of its successor" (World Publishing Co., N.Y., 1963, p.499)

#### ENGELS AND MONOGAMY

More significant still is the inflexible and undialectical understanding of monogamy that Connolly employed as compared with Engels, Morgan or Bebel. For, Engels, in exploring the possibility of monogamy's survival in the future, argued that it must meet certain conditions as to its content and form - conditions absent in the bourgeois form of marriage. Under capitalism and societies based on private property in general, he argued, neither the man nor the woman is truly monogamous, for the man has possession of the woman because of his control of property and not by virtue of love or elective affinity. Thus he suggested:

"If now the economic considerations also disappear which made women put up with the habitual infidelity of their husbands - concern for their own means of existence and still more for their own children's future - then, according to all previous experience, the equality of woman thereby achieved will tend infinitely more to make men really monogamous than to make women polyandrous" (Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, p 144-5, Laurence & Wishart, 1977)



Clara Zetkin - greatest Marxist women's leader, editor of Die Gleichheit

However, in sharp contrast to Connolly's definition of monogamy as an indissoluble union, Engels counterposes one that is fundamentally free:

"But what will quite certainly disappear from monogamy are all the features stamped upon it through its origin in property relations; these are, in the first place, supremacy of the man and secondly, the indissolubility of marriage" (p.145)

This projection, and Engels was quite clear that it involved some speculation, did not merely envisage freer access to divorce for all; rather, freedom to separate would not even require wading "through the useless mire of a divorce case". The emphasis may differ from Bebel at points but the two positions are fundamentally in agreement and completely at odds with Connolly's beliefs. At root is a clear difference in method.

#### DEMARCATING SEXUAL QUESTIONS

The key weakness in Connolly's Marxism was that he narrowed its scope to the immediate economic conditions of capitalism. In previous articles we showed how this forced him to adopt other non-marxist theories to tackle the national question and to reject the idea that religion can be explained on the basis of historical materialism. Likewise with women's oppression and the family. Socialism would, he believed, remove the economic hardships of working class and family life, but beyond that, sexual relations and conflicts would still be sustained by the same forces in exactly the same way as before:

"The abolition of the capitalist system will, undoubtedly, solve the economic side of the woman question, but it will solve that alone. The question of Marriage, of divorce, of paternity, of the equality of woman with man are physical and sexual questions, or questions of temperamental affiliation as in marriage, and were we living in a Socialist Republic would still be hotly contested as they are today. One great element of disagreement would be removed - the economic - but men and women would still be



unfaithful to their vows, and questions of the intellectual equality of the sexes would still be as much in dispute as they are today, even though economic equality would be assured." (Connolly De Leon Controversy p.8)

The rigid demarcation which Connolly makes between the economic relations of production and the 'private' sphere of the family, sexuality etc., could not be clearer. His insistence that Marxists were confined to discussion of the economic 'sphere' alone, which derives from his Scottish apprenticeship in the SDF, led directly to the conclusion that the question of divorce was not a question for socialists. His own attitude to marriage and divorce remained rooted in the combination of Catholic and Victorian ideology, under which he grew up, with their notion of a timeless "decency" and "morality", actually bourgeois morality. His eagerness to make socialism relevant to Irish Catholic workers, both while in the United States and in Ireland, tended to reinforce this weakness and push him into adaptation to the very institutions that sanctified women's oppression - the Catholic Church in particular.

### DIVORCE

The contradictions of this position are revealed in his anti-capitalist polemic "Labour, Nationality and Religion" (1910), written in reply to the Lenten pastorals of the Jesuit, Kane. In his attempt to simultaneously tackle Kane's denunciation of the economic theories of socialism and steer clear of what he regarded as the legitimate terrain of the clergy - marriage, the family etc. - he conceded to the clergy on divorce. His only answer was to suggest that divorce was a social evil foisted on a society by an amoral capitalist class who could escape the criticism of the clergy while indulging themselves to the limit:

"Who then are the chief defenders of divorce? The Capitalists. And who can come fresh from the divorce courts, reeking with uncleanness and immorality, to consummate another marriage, and yet know that he can confidently rely upon Catholic prelates and priests to command the workers to "order themselves reverently before their superiors" with him as a type? The Capitalist."

"The divorce evil of today arises not out of socialist thinking, but out of the capitalist system, whose morals and philosophy are based upon the idea of individualism, and the cash nexus as the sole bond in society." (Labour Nationality & Religion, New Books, p.38)

On these grounds Connolly opposed divorce. His answer to Kane's suggestion that divorce would lead to women becoming the mistress of one man after another was to say that this was a slander on the virtue of womanhood - Irish womanhood in particular, and that such a thought was a reflection on Kane's own imagination:

"Aye, verily, the uncleanness lies not in this alleged socialist proposal, but in the minds of those who so interpret it" (p.39)

Here Connolly counterposes the christian ideal of woman as faithful mother to its darker portrayal of woman as serpentine temptress. This is in line with his general approach to all criticism of the church, namely to use christian ideology against the church fathers who have apparently forgotten it in order to serve mammon instead of God. One can only speculate about how Connolly would have stood on the Parnell crisis had he been in Ireland in 1890 when the greatest popular and Parliamentary leader of the Home Rule movement was toppled and destroyed and his party split with the aid of the Catholic Church's denunciation when he was cited in a divorce case. While Connolly condemns Grattan for upholding "free love", in "Labour in Irish History", he is strangely silent about Parnell in the same work, perhaps because Parnell is a difficult case for his general thesis which denies to the Irish bourgeoisie any progressive role, in any epoch or period in the struggle for independence.

### MARXISM AND DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

His approach radically departs from the method and established tradition of Marxism, which, contrary to Connolly's assertions, defended unconditionally the right to divorce as a democratic demand. Connolly's protestations about the morality of women - "the superior morals of the women of the real people" - serve to evade the legal-democratic side of the divorce question to which socialists must address themselves - the unconditional right to end a marriage. From Marx through to Lenin and Trotsky, the scientific socialist movement defended this right, but without any illusion that it was the solution to women's oppression. Not only did they fight for divorce as an important freedom in itself, but they regarded its legal attainment under capitalism as important in removing an obstacle to recognising the fundamental root of women's oppression - capitalist class society itself. As Lenin expressed it:

"In most cases the right to divorce will remain unrealisable under capitalism, for the oppressed sex is subjugated economically. No matter how much democracy there is under capitalism, the woman remains a "domestic slave", a slave locked up in the bedroom, nursery, kitchen"

"The fuller the freedom of divorce, the clearer will women see that the source of their "domestic slavery" is capitalism, not lack of rights"

"Under capitalism the right of divorce, as ALL other rights without exception, is conditional, restricted, formal, narrow and extremely difficult of realisation. Yet no self respecting Social-Democrat will consider anyone opposing the right of divorce a democrat, let alone a socialist. This is the crux of the matter. ALL "democracy" consists in the proclamation and realisation of "rights" which under capitalism are realisable only to a very small degree and only relatively. But, without the proclamation of these rights, without a struggle to introduce them now, immediately, without training the masses in the spirit of this struggle, socialism is impossible".

(Lenin, 1916. "Lenin on the Emancipation of



The conflict between Lenin and Connolly could hardly be clearer. In terms of theory and general method it is further evidence of Connolly's failure to grasp the importance and distinctness for socialists of the democratic programme. On the other hand, both Rosa Luxembourg who posed the importance of the divorce question, and also Lenin's Russian Social-democrats, had behind them the tradition of struggle of two decades of the German Socialist Women's movement, from which Connolly remained remote.

#### CONNOLLY'S VISION OF WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION

To grasp more fully Connolly's understanding of the "woman question" it is necessary to go further than pointing to his distance from the tradition of a working class women's movement. We must also point out the significance, in Connolly's approach, of what we have termed in previous articles his "populist regression from Marxism".

This regression emerges in his adaptation to Irish Nationalism. It involved adopting the sentimental and profoundly false nationalist historiography of Alice Stopford Green and other nationalist historians in order to portray English conquest as the source of all suffering in Ireland. In relation to women this implied that Irish women needed to be emancipated from the legacy of the English conquest and the centuries of English rule. For Connolly this is not posed as distinct from liberating women from their oppression by capitalism.

The chapter, "Woman", in "The Reconquest of Ireland", illustrates this clearly, despite the fact that it is the primary source of isolated quotations by every element of the Irish left eager to show that Connolly shared their views. This pamphlet, written after 1913 contains his only attempt at a rounded statement of his perspective on women's emancipation. In the foreword he tells us that

"The underlying idea of this work is that the labour movement must set itself the Reconquest of Ireland as its final goal".

He goes on to repeat the version of Irish history already familiar to readers of Labour in Irish History. He draws a picture of a communal democratic Gaelic society destroyed by the English and replaced by the greed and tyranny of this "alien system". We have already argued in Class Struggle No. 15 that this presents a false view of Gaelic Ireland and its conquest. It was an emergent feudal society, and far from private property being an alien intrusion it was clearly well rooted in the whole course of Irish development. This myth of communal democracy as being natural to the Irish race, however, serves to allow Connolly to blame the exploitation, unemployment, disease, slums and religious divisions of Belfast and Dublin on England and its "alien" system of "feudal-capitalist" property. In



Winifred Carney - organised Belfast women workers.

this way the National Question is interdefined, and thus wrongly identified, with the question of socialist revolution: - the "reconquest" is justified as the STRATEGIC goal of Labour.

Having dealt with Belfast and Dublin, Connolly turns, in Chapter 6, to the implications of the conquest for Irish womanhood:

"The daughters of the Irish peasantry have been the cheapest slaves in existence - slaves to their own family, who were, in turn slaves to all social parasites of a landlord and gombeen-ridden community" ...

"The system of private capitalist property in Ireland, as in other countries, has given birth to the law of primogeniture under which the eldest son usurps the ownership of all property to the exclusion of the females of the family. Rooted in a property system founded upon force, this iniquitous law was unknown to the older social system of ancient Erin, and, in its actual workings out in modern Erin, it has been and is responsible for the moral murder of countless virtuous Irish maidens." ...

"Just as the present system in Ireland has made cheap slaves or untrained emigrants of the flower of our peasant women, so it has darkened the lives and starved the intellect of the female operatives in mills, shops and factories. Wherever there is a great demand for female labour, as in Belfast, we find that the woman tends to become the chief support of the house. Driven out to work at the earliest possible age, she remains fettered to her wage-earning - a slave for life. Marriage does not mean for her a rest from outside labour, it usually means that to the outside labour, she has added the duty of a double domestic toil." ...

"Of what use to such sufferers can be the re-establishment of any form of Irish State if it does not embody the emancipation of womanhood. As we have shown, the whole spirit and practice of modern Ireland, as it expresses itself through its pastors and masters, bear socially and politically, hard upon women. That spirit and that practice had their origins in



the establishment in this country of a social and political order based upon the private ownership of property, as against the older order based upon the common ownership of a related community."

For Connolly, "Irish womanhood" refers to working and toiling women of town and country, "the real women of the people". It is a conception that distinguishes them from bourgeois women. But at the same time it obscures the uniquely important features of working women, and working class women in general, upon which the continental movement was founded. Under Zetkin, this meant a programme fighting for the right to work on equal terms with men, unionisation, maternity leave, divorce and political equality - all backed up by industrial muscle.

On the other hand, it was not the toiling or working women, but rather the mainly bourgeois and petty-bourgeois women who were conducting the agitation for women's suffrage rights in Ireland and Britain. Connolly recognised the progressive elements of these women's struggle and thus had to relate positively to them. To do this, however, he avoided explicitly acknowledging their CLASS character, following a pattern which we also see in relation to the national struggle, tending to liquidate the independent working-class interest and failing to arrive at the necessary perspective of CRITICAL support for such movements.

For him the common thread of all Irish history is his belief that the bourgeoisie always sold out and never struggled for anything progressive, that only the toilers could be relied upon to struggle against the "alien system", and only they truly belonged to the "nation". When struggle was in fact led by figures who were not of the toiling classes - Tone, Emmet, Lalor, Mitchell and later Pearse - he avoided any explicit acknowledgement of their class character and linked them with the struggle of the toilers under the common name of "patriots", educated adherents of the nation or even precursors of socialism. In his own time, in the industrial field he was also faced with the support of non-working class intellectuals such as George Russell whose open letter "To the Masters of Dublin" in 1913 he includes with the published "Reconquest". In fact the Reconquest explicitly looks forward to "the co-operation of the wage labourers and their intellectual comrades" (p.63). In relation to the women's struggle, Connolly's analysis suffered from a similar weakness.

#### OPTIMISM

Connolly notes how in Ireland the "women's movement" arises NOT out of the working class but occurs at a time when, nevertheless, women are being drawn into factory labour. He makes this association to bolster the hope that the middle-class women's movement will develop a social conscience about the conditions of working and toiling women:

"It will be observed by the thoughtful reader, that the development of what is known as the women's movement has synchronised with the appearance of women upon the industrial field, and that the acuteness and fierceness of the women's war has kept even pace with the spread

amongst educated women of a knowledge of the sordid and cruel nature of the lot of their suffering sisters of the wage-earning class"

"We might say that the development of what, for want of a better name, is known as sex-consciousness, has waited for the spread amongst the more favoured women, of a deep feeling of social consciousness, what we have elsewhere in this work described as a civic conscience." ...

"it is a matter for deep thankfulness that the more intellectual women broke out into revolt against the anomaly of being compelled to bear all the worst burdens of the struggle, and yet be denied even the few political rights enjoyed by the male portion of their fellow sufferers".

"Had the boon of political equality been granted as readily as political wisdom should have dictated, much of the revolutionary value of woman's enfranchisement would probably have been lost. But the delay, the politician's breach of faith with the women, a breach of which all parties were equally culpable, the long-continued struggle, the ever-spreading wave of martyrdom of the militant women of Great Britain and Ireland, and the spread amongst the active spirits of the Labour movement of an appreciation of the genuineness of the women's longings for freedom, as of their courage in fighting for it, produced an almost incalculable effect for good upon the relations between the two movements.

"In Ireland the women's cause is felt by all Labour men and women as their cause; the Labour cause has no more earnest and whole-hearted supporters than the militant women."

Nothing, however, in the history of either labour or women's movements in Ireland justified such optimism. There were honourable exceptions within both movements. There were women like Helena Moloney and Louie Bennett who proved vigorous union organisers. Connolly himself was a stalwart supporter of women's suffrage within the labour movement. But in truth the Irish labour movement showed no particular sympathies to the women's struggle and the franchise agitation was led by middle class women who did not identify with the needs of the working class - even on the limited issue of the franchise.

#### MOMENTARY CONJUNCTION

The conjunction of forces did, momentarily, lead to mutual benefits. The 1913 lockout saw a deepening conversion of some militant suffragists to the cause of trade unionism. Connolly's own support for the feminists during 1912 when they were fiercely attacked by reactionary elements, and jailed, is also on record. (See "Smashing Times" by R. Cullen Owens, Attic Press 1985.)

The suffrage movement sought the vote for women, not the removal of the property qualification that would have enfranchised workers in general. In the debate at the Irish TUC & Labour Party in 1914, Connolly advanced a partially feminist case. As Cullen Owens writes:



"At the 1914 Irish Trade Union Congress Larkin made the point that suffrage could be used for or against the working class. Connolly, however, stated that he was in favour of giving women the vote even if they used it against him as a human right!" (p.85)

Larkin was against the franchise for women if limited by property. Connolly's support was unconditional although his position and that of the ITUC&LP was actually for universal franchise - "adult suffrage". While debating the women's suffrage struggle, he did not, however, have a perspective of mobilising for adult suffrage. In fact, he did not fight at all to mobilise the rank and file of the ITUC&LP - of which he was a leading figure - around any political action programme, a problem to which we return in later articles. Thus neither did he warn of the dangers of the limited aspirations of militant feminism. In other words, he failed to make his stance one of CRITICAL support for the feminist demand.



Helena Molony - organiser of  
Irish Women Workers Union.

On the other hand, when a Liberal, Geoffrey Howard, in 1909 introduced a private members' Bill in the House of Commons to introduce universal adult suffrage without property qualification, the majority of the suffragettes refused to support it. In this instance the working class found a consistent socialist ally in Dora Montefiori and the section she had formed in Britain of the International Socialist Women's Bureau which brought over Clara Zetkin to speak to a rally in support of the Bill. The class character of the suffrage movement was beyond dispute, but Connolly's position left him unable to move at all in the direction of Montefiori's attempt to build a proletarian women's movement.

In fact Connolly settled for the view that the middle class "women's righters" (as they were described by Zetkin) were a healthy example to the mass of toiling women of Ireland:

"In Ireland the soul of womanhood has been trained for centuries to surrender its rights, and as a consequence the race has lost its chief capacity to withstand assaults from without, and demoralisation from within. Those who preached to Irish womankind fidelity to duty as the only

19 ideal to be striven after, were, consciously or unconsciously, fashioning a slave mentality, which the Irish mothers had perforce to transmit to the Irish child."

"The militant women who, without abandoning their fidelity to duty, are yet teaching their sisters to assert their rights, are re-establishing a sane and perfect balance that makes more possible a well-ordered Irish nation." (Reconquest, Ch. 6)

In Connolly's schema, then, militant women from the "more favoured" and "educated" sections of society have earned their MORAL right to be counted in the ranks of those who will re-construct the nation after the Reconquest of Ireland from the grips of an English-originated and English-maintained capitalist enslavement. The maximum goal is "a well-ordered Irish nation" - a slogan which, in subordinating the proletarian slogan of the Workers' Republic, underlined Connolly's belief that the two were identical, because only those forces which had at heart the interests of the oppressed and exploited would play any role in that reconquest. His goal of "a well-ordered nation" clearly implies a fudging, here as elsewhere, of class boundaries, and thus fusion with the militants of another class and their programme in the struggle of the "real Irish".

The militant separatist nationalist movement of Connolly's period in Ireland did not identify itself with the emancipation of women. Thus, in order to write the equality of women into his programme Connolly needed the militant suffragist women. For, it is clear he had no perspective of mobilising working class women in a specific struggle, using class action, for women's emancipation.

Connolly was not wrong in seeing that historically the women's agitation coincided with the rise of militant trade unionism in the first 15 years of the century. But it was essentially a temporary coincidence. In fact, as Margaret Ward points out in Feminist Review (No. 10, Feb. 1982), the collapse of the suffrage movement in Ireland was inevitable for a single issue movement. She adds:

"The pity was that in losing the suffrage movement, Irish women lost their only independent voice, as nothing emerged in its place. With no organisation to give priority to women's needs post-partition Ireland was able to implement, with little resistance, highly reactionary policies in relation to women, whose domestic role within the family became endowed with almost sacramental qualities." (An account of the Irish Suffrage Movement, p.35.)

The consolidation of women's oppression in partitioned Ireland happened in spite of the extension of the franchise. The Free State ban on introducing divorce legislation and the outlawing of contraception as well as the introduction of reactionary censorship legislation all served the interests of the Irish bourgeoisie and its ally - the Catholic Church.



But Connolly failed to anticipate these dangers. He effectively offered a separate minimum programme of adapting to, and indeed "cheering on", the efforts of the non-working class suffrage movement, contenting himself with the promise that in the last analysis, the working class would have its say. That is the problem with the following, uncritically celebrated statement:

"None so fitted to break the chains as they who wear them, none so well equipped to decide what is a fetter. In its march towards freedom, the working class of Ireland must cheer on the efforts of those women who, feeling on their souls and bodies the fetters of the ages, have arisen to strike them off, and cheer all the louder if in its hatred of thralldom and passion for freedom the women's army forges ahead of the militant army of Labour.

"But whosoever carries the outworks of the citadel of oppression, the working class alone can raze it to the ground." (conclusion of Reconquest, Ch. 6).

The separation of immediate struggles centred on the vote for women from the goals of socialism and the workers' republic could not be starker. There is no perspective here for bridging the gap between the goals of a liberal or radical feminist movement and those of working class women which go far beyond the limits of capitalism; no warnings about the inevitability that the Suffragists' "alliance" with the working class will at some point turn into its opposite, and no operative perspective for the class-independent organisation of working women around clear and concrete action goals.

#### RECONQUEST - RIGHTS AND DUTIES

The problem is not merely what Connolly lacked due to his remoteness from the European marxist women's movement which could have armed him with a perspective. Crucially, the weakness rests in his attempt to incorporate his vision of women's emancipation into the central theme of his thought - the FLAWED schema of the "Re-conquest of Ireland as the highest goal" of the "real Irish". This compounded the initial lack of a Marxist foundation. It led him to limit even the scope of immediate bourgeois-democratic rights to be fought for. If his initial grounding in Scottish Marxism left him flawed on divorce rights and related questions, his populist adaptation to native plebeian traditions forced him to concede ever more ground to forces such as the churches in Ireland which underpinned the "outworks" of oppression. In his celebrated chapter on "Woman", Connolly called for the combination of the fight for rights with "the serene performance of duty". What did this mean? From its context it is clear that each was to exercise a check on the other. As to "duties", it is clearly linked to the bonds of marriage, for it is these bonds that his chapter says have been undermined by the Conquest, resulting in the emigration of the daughters of Erin to America and England to "undergo hardships" and "succumb to temptations", and in the "moral murder of countless virtuous Irish maidens".

True, Connolly distinguished between "rights" as the term "is used by, and is familiar, to the Labour Movement" and "the thin and attenuated meaning of them to which we have been accustomed



Constance Markievicz - captain, Irish Citizen Army.

by the liberal or other spokesmen of the capitalist class, that class to whom the assertion of rights has ever been the last word of human wisdom". However, his distinction lacks the sharpness found in Lenin, for whom the incomplete and unrealisable nature of all rights under capitalism demanded that socialists fight all the harder for them in order to reveal to the masses the limits of reforms within capitalism. By contrast, Connolly's schema meant that women's "rights" had to be checked by "fidelity to duty", as a condition of the "well-ordered Irish nation".

This disavowing of the fight for women's emancipation into the national re-conquest in effect denies the specific role of working class women; this despite Connolly's record of organising the most exploited of working women, as in Belfast on his return from America in 1910, which rightly stands to his credit.

At the level of basic working class unity in the economic struggle, Larkin opposed allowing women into the one big union with men, i.e. into the Irish Transport, for largely chauvinist reasons. Connolly's healthy class instincts led him to the opposite view. He got around Larkin by organising them alongside the Irish Transport Workers Union as the Irish Textile Workers Union but was eventually compelled to usher them into the Irish Women Workers' Union. In his concluding chapter of the Reconquest, where he outlines the task of building Industrial Unions he writes:

"With the Industrial Union as our principle of action, branches can be formed to give expression to the need for effective supervision of the affairs of the workshop, shipyard or railway; each branch to consist of the men and women now associated in Labour upon the same



Despite these strengths, i.e. his industrial unionism and his readiness to respond to working class women in struggle, Connolly did not build his perspective around a central and key role for working class women at the point of production. While it would be quite unfair to ascribe to him the reactionary view that a woman's place is in the home, there are signs that his views on marriage and his populist adaptation to left-nationalism prevented him from making a theoretical and programmatic transition to a consistently Marxist perspective. Hence, although the textile workers of Belfast were predominantly married women and Connolly sided with their fight against being sacked, there is no evidence that he ever raised the general demand for the right to work for married women or for the linked demands of child care facilities, paid maternity leave etc. Such demands were high on the list of priorities in the German women's movement of Zetkin. (See "Clara Zetkin: Selected Writings", ed. P.S.Foner, International Publishers, New York, 1984.)

It is notable that in his description of the conditions of Belfast's working women in the "Re-conquest" Connolly did not draw any implications for the strategic role of working class women. They are portrayed only as passive victims. This is all the more notable in view of his practical involvement with their struggles in the same period. The only plausible explanation, apart from his isolation from the continental Marxists, is that putting working women's rights and struggles to the forefront of his programme for women would have forced him to radically re-think his populist schema with its "sane and perfect balance". In the end he simply exhorted toiling women to support the suffragists against the 'outworks' now, while supporting 'Labour' in its eventual razing of the "citadel of oppression". Moreover, even these struggles were fused with the national goal of re-conquest of Ireland. All in all it was a role for women that was, if not entirely passive, quite other than a leading or independent class role.

#### SILENCE

Probably for the same kind of reasons he is silent also about the traditional demand of revolutionaries for the socialisation of housework. This is not easily dismissed in a socialist and militant trade union organiser who expressed such anger about the double burden of toil and labour on women.

The 1910 anti-socialist polemical sermons of the Jesuit Kane quoted Bebel's books, on the socialisation of child-rearing. Kane, of course, twists it into a nonsense about the child growing up "a stranger to its father and mother". Connolly, in his reply to Kane, under the chapter heading of "The honour of the home", clearly baulks at advancing any POSITIVE content of the socialist programme. His evasive defence of socialism is as follows.

"The reader will observe there is nothing whatever in the words quoted from Bebel which justifies this statement that the child is to be taken from the parents, or brought up a stranger

to its father and mother, or without the influence of a home. There is simply the statement that it is the duty of the state to provide for the care, education and physical and mental development of the child. All the rest is merely read into the statement by the perverted malevolence of our critic. And yet this same critic had declared, as already quoted in this chapter, "the reason of civil society is in the insufficiency of the family alone to attain that fuller perfection of human nature which is the heritage of its birth." But when he comes across the Socialist proposal to supplement and help out that "insufficiency" he forthwith makes it the occasion for the foulest slanders". (Labour, Nationality and Religion.)

Like his "answer" to Kane on divorce in the same chapter, the content of this position defends the existing conception of the family rather than outlines the goal of the socialist alternative! There is no conception of the socialisation of domestic toil in evidence as a positive part of Connolly's world view.

#### CONCLUSION

Many factors made for Connolly's weaknesses as a socialist on the question of women's liberation. These were a combination of his religious background, the Victorian world in which he grew up, and a flawed mechanical economic Marxism to which he had been apprenticed in Britain. His innovative attempt to creatively link the class struggle with the National Question in Ireland unfortunately toppled over towards nationalist perspectives which even further reinforced his conservative views of women, marriage, the family etc.

In clearly demarcating ourselves from these political weaknesses we in no sense intend to impugn his class instincts or even his personal attitude towards women in struggle. In fact his personal qualities played a significant role in surmounting any acquired paternalism towards women. At this level, the evidence is ample that he sought to encourage women to take leadership positions at every possible moment, whether in trade union organisation or in the Irish Citizen Army, and there is no need to restate details here.

In making this assessment of Connolly's view of the emancipation of women we have avoided damning him for not independently making the programmatic advances of contemporary Marxists in the more developed working class movements of the continent, but rather we have aimed to evaluate him in the light of those advances while seeking to understand him in his historical, political and cultural context. Criticism of Connolly can thus become a bridge for women militants and socialists to the richness and living relevance of the Marxist proletarian and revolutionary women's tradition, unacknowledged on the Irish left.



# South Africa/Azania

## ONLY THE PERMANENT

## REVOLUTION CAN END

## BLACK OPPRESSION

The uneven and combined development of world capitalism is nowhere more starkly seen than in the vast continent of Africa. The belt of sub-Saharan countries, crushed by semi-colonial servitude, contains the most impoverished states on earth. Yet at the southern tip of the continent a racist state power presides over a South African economy which is among the most highly monopolised in the capitalist world. It accounts for nearly one quarter of the continent's entire production, including 40% of its manufacturing output, and consumes 50% of the whole of Africa's energy.

The 25.5 million black, Asian and mixed race population, deprived of all political rights, receives only a tiny percentage of the vast wealth that their labour produces. The 4.5 millions who are white take 60% and occupy 86.3% of the country and own virtually all of industry. This system has now built up a massive explosive charge of rage that threatens to not only to blow apart this barbaric racist state but to destroy the very capitalist system itself which created Apartheid.

How has it been possible, in this century of imperialist capitalism, for a country to transform itself from a colony and become a minor imperialist power in its own right? That is but one of the many important questions underlying a correct understanding of the road onto which socialists must fight to lead the coming revolution in South Africa. The major questions of that revolution were hammered out over the past year among the sections of the Leninist-Trotskyist MRCI (Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International) to which the Irish Workers Group is affiliated.

Our analysis and debate on the questions of the South African Revolution were crystallised into a political resolution via an MRCI conference of 5 national sections and 4 observer groups in London in November and a delegate meeting in Frankfurt in December. We present the resolution in this issue of Class Struggle. This statement of our positions

is condensed from much lengthier discussions. We shall expand this statement further in print and in open discussion.

In particular, further material will be published by way of debate with positions already put forward by other political currents claiming to be Trotskyist, i.e. by movements represented in Ireland in Militant Tendency, the Socialist Workers Movement, the Peoples Democracy and the League for a Workers Republic. Already in public debate clear and basic differences of method and politics have been brought to the surface by the events in S.Africa, which the IWG has publicly taken up at meetings held by Militant and the SWM, especially on the TACTICAL use of the slogan calling for the S.African trade unions to build a fighting Workers Party.

The statement on S.Africa published in this Class Struggle puts forward a number of specific tactics that can enable the vanguard of the South African working class to come consciously into the lead of the struggle against Apartheid. Among the centrists, many of these positions, e.g. the call for General Strike action, are either postponed indefinitely (by Militant) or regarded as academic (by the SWM) and not a legitimate concern of revolutionary internationalists outside of South Africa. We disagree profoundly. 'Tactics' are NOT secondary questions; they are the vital bridge between the revolutionary programme and the actual realities of the S.African revolutionary situation. They are therefore an acid-test of the method of all those claiming to build an international leadership on the road to world socialism.

Our statement here IS A CALL TO ACTION addressed to revolutionary workers and fighters in South Africa and all who may come to their aid.

We believe debate and discussion of these issues is a vital duty of political internationalists, and must never be allowed to be excluded from any fighting solidarity Movement.

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MEMBER GROUPS OF THE MOVEMENT FOR A  
REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL:

Arbeiter Standpunkt - Austria.  
Gruppe Arbeitermacht - Germany  
Irish Workers Group  
Workers Power - Britain  
Pouvoir Ouvrier - France

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## APARTHEID AND SOUTH AFRICAN IMPERIALISM

23

1. South Africa began the 20th century as a colony of British imperialism. To-day it exists as a minor imperialist power in its own right. Not only was British imperialism forced to concede to this development due to its own weakness after two world wars, but it co-operated in the transference of capital ownership and the provision of investment to allow this development to take place. In return, South Africa promotes the regional interests of Anglo-American imperialism as well as extending its own interests.

The position of South Africa as the producer of major strategically important mineral wealth and the retention of huge investments, means that British and American imperialisms are determined to retain South Africa as a junior partner in an imperialist alliance dominating Southern Africa.

2. The Apartheid State combines imperialist democracy for the immensely privileged white minority with a brutal dictatorship over the black majority. Systematic racism was the only 'justification' possible for keeping the black masses as 'colonial slaves' of the whites. Military and police repression are the only means of maintaining it. The Apartheid system grew naturally out of the conditions of a racist settler state seeking to deny self-determination, independence or indeed even the most basic political and civil rights to the blacks. That racist state owed its historic development to the need of British imperialist mining capital for the supply and maximum exploitation of black labour. As a result the blacks were denied any ownership of land and cattle. In order to develop the process of proletarianisation black farmers were deprived of their traditional forms of proprietorship and forced to work as wage slaves.



While we recognise that the black masses suffer political oppression akin to that of colonial domination, we reject the 'internal colonialisation' theses as argued by African nationalists and the South African Communist Party. We do so in particular for two reasons:

(a) it contains the false argument that South Africa consists of 'separate nations' (i.e. a 'black' and a 'white' nation). This concedes to the Afrikaner and English-speaking whites the idea that separate nationhood (i.e. partition of the South African state) could be advanced as a political solution to the present crisis.

(b) it falsely ties the ending of the blacks' colonial status to a separate, democratic stage in the revolutionary process.

3. The nature of the Apartheid State, as a qualitative development of the racist colonial state can only be understood as the outcome of a reactionary alliance between the Afrikaner working class, petty bourgeois and farmers to:

(a) restructure the relationship between South African capitalism and British imperialism in a way which both extended the economic and political power of the Afrikaner and preserved the reduced interests of foreign imperialism;

(b) guarantee the existence and extension of labour aristocratic privileges (wages, conditions of employment, job reservation) of the small Afrikaner working class which felt itself threatened by the mass of unskilled African labour below and the skilled white immigrant labour from above;

(c) restrict the freedom of movement and urbanisation of black labour to provide cheap abundant agricultural labour;

(d) encourage the emergence of an independent Afrikaner bourgeoisie.

The success of that alliance resulted in the consolidation of the apartheid state after the Second World War which further systematised racial discrimination, job segregation and land division, entrenching the alliance between South African capital and the white working class.

4. South African monopoly capitalism finally attained the status of an independent imperialist power in the 1960s. To-day, the economy is highly monopolised; Anglo-American, a predominantly South African owned multi-national, towers above all else. The ownership of capital is overwhelmingly in the hands of English and Afrikaner South Africans.

From the beginning of its imperialist development South Africa has been an exporter of capital. However, because the greatest source of super-profits was to be found INTERNALLY within the mines and industry of South Africa, this remained relatively undeveloped even though it was still responsible for opening up Namibia to imperialist exploitation.



Only in the late 1970s with the evident stagnation of monopoly capitalism in South Africa did the rate of increase in the export of capital accelerate.

Historically, South Africa has been a major source of strategically important raw materials and a prime source of superprofits. Peak profitability has occurred after World War 2, in the 1960s and 1970s, and this period witnessed the gradual eclipse of British imperialism's role as chief foreign investor by American imperialism. Britain, however, retains a greater political leverage due to its historical and current political ties inside South Africa. Coincidental with the late 1970s and 1980s crisis of South African monopoly capitalism, the rate of increases of new British and US investment in South Africa has declined due to falling profitability.

Britain and the US fear above all the destruction of Apartheid from below by a revolution of the black masses which would threaten their investments. They do however seek to pressure the Afrikaner alliance to reform Apartheid so as to co-opt into the South African ruling class a black component, i.e. to do a deal with the black nationalists, giving them a subordinate share in political power, the better to head off and where necessary repress the struggles of the black workers and the urban poor. The problem for them is how to pressure the South African state to grant 'concessions' in such a way as not to break up its repressive apparatus.

### **CONTRADICTIONS OF APARTHEID - A BRAKE ON LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY**

Apartheid made possible the most ruthless exploitation of the black working class. The crisis of South African monopoly capitalism in the 1970s and growing black militancy forced the monopolists to reconsider the labour aristocratic privileges of the white Afrikaner working class.

The restructuring of Apartheid in the 1970s (removal of certain features of 'petty Apartheid', erosion of the job bar, reforms of residential rights) was an attempt to deal with the crisis of South African capitalism by lowering costs and raising labour productivity.

Government inquiries, such as the Wiehahn Report, aimed to address the cramping effects of Apartheid policies on capitalist accumulation in so far as they restricted the movement of black labour to urban industry, prevented a necessary minimal level of black literacy and technical education and created artificial shortages of skilled labour. Whilst there was an unevenness in the response of different sections of South African capitalists, some restructuring was in their general interest.

The restructuring of Apartheid presupposed above all its continuation in the decisive sphere of political rights. The Constitutional initiatives of the early 1980s have re-affirmed the opposition of Afrikaner nationalism to political power for the African masses. Instead, through the 1983 Constitution they have endeavoured unsuccessfully to:

(a) divide the Asian and Coloured communities from the African masses;

24 (b) strengthen the executive and military powers of the President to equip the state with the repressive power necessary to crush black resistance;

(c) indicate to the class collaborationist black petty bourgeoisie and tribal leaders that power sharing may come in time.

### **THE DANGERS OF A BOURGEOIS DEMOCRATIC COUNTER-REVOLUTION**

Because of the class alliance on which it rests, the white supremacist Afrikaner bourgeoisie cannot reform Apartheid out of existence 'from above'. The white labour aristocracy and petty bourgeoisie who constitute the state bureaucracy and armed forces will not voluntarily surrender their privileges. Apartheid will only be destroyed by a mighty revolutionary movement of the black masses and first and foremost the black proletariat. Can capitalism survive the death of Apartheid? This cannot be excluded but the price of its survival would be a bourgeois-democratic counter-revolution which robbed the rural and urban workers of their victory.

The agency for this abortion of the South African revolution is the nascent black bourgeoisie and the aspirant petty bourgeoisie who will seek to strike a deal with defeated South African and multi-national big capital. Any programme which outlines a self-contained bourgeois-democratic stage opens the door to a capitalist South Africa. Any coalition of class forces built on such a perspective stands to be betrayed at any and every critical juncture by the treacherous bourgeoisie and the vacillating petty bourgeois forces. Only working class leadership and the goal of the proletarian dictatorship can assure victory for the South African revolution against racist, imperialist capital.

### **PERMANENT REVOLUTION**

The South African revolution must be made permanent or it will not successfully solve the burning social problems of the South African masses - unemployment, poverty, exploitation. The only class that can carry through this permanent revolution is the black proletariat, primarily the black African working class together with the much smaller Asian and 'Coloured' working class, and its allies in the impoverished sections of the black petty bourgeoisie.

If the black proletariat forms the vanguard class in the South African revolution then within this proletariat the vanguard is to be found in different sectors. First, the trade unions whose social power and degree of urbanisation places them in the front ranks. Alongside them stand the youth and the women of the townships who bear the brunt of the struggle at the moment. No one political ideology unites these vanguard elements. They look variously to the ANC, Black Consciousness, or even to no party at all. But a revolu-



tionary nucleus must direct its activity and propaganda first and foremost to these struggling sections without discriminating on the basis of the professed political ideology of these sections.

The white working class forms a reactionary roadblock. For it is not simply a white segment of the South African proletariat but a massively privileged and pampered labour aristocracy - large sections of which are employed in the repressive Apartheid state apparatus or in the role of overseers and task masters of the black proletariat. Winning the white workers over cannot be a condition of the South African revolution. Under the pressure of mass upheaval, through the imminent prospect of the loss of all their privileges, individuals or even sections of skilled workers may come over to the black proletariat. They should be encouraged to do so. But there can be no special privileges or reserved place for the white working class in the workers' united front, that is, in the common struggle of the working class to smash apartheid.



## THE PROLETARIAT AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN REVOLUTION

The only consistently revolutionary class in South Africa is the black proletariat. Apartheid seeks to retard its homogeneity and prevent its urbanisation. However, by the mid 1980s this class, through its position in mining, manufacturing and agriculture, possessed all the social power necessary to deal a decisive blow to the Apartheid state together with its capitalist roots.

The black proletariat has a rich history of struggle and organisation, but never have the black workers been more organised than today, with 10% in trade unions. The unions embrace one part of the vanguard of the black working class. Since 1973 a series of successful struggles by black workers has boosted confidence and legal organisation. Substantial increases in wages have been won and with it legal recognition of black trade unionism.

25 While class collaboration is the natural political outlook of reformist trade unionism, no established caste of trade union bureaucrats exists AS YET in the black trade unions. Consequently, a tradition of rank and file democracy pervades the new unions. This rank and file democracy will have to be vigorously and consciously defended within the new federation COSATU. The officialdom of this federation will immediately come under the pressure of the state and the multinationals. Its growth will provide a basis for bureaucratic privilege. Lack of an alternative revolutionary communist leadership will tend to allow the leaders to use the unions as a brake on the mass struggles, as a de-politicising agency rather than a school for socialism and an instrument of the class struggle.

The emergence of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) out of a merger of FOSATU, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and other smaller unions represents an important landmark in the history of black trade unionism. It is crucial that the new federation affirm the traditional rank and file democracy and accountability that it inscribed in the origins of the new unions. The rank and file need to be alert to the pressure of the conservative trade union bureaucracies of the international trade union movement who with their advice and money aim to crystallise out of the new federation a caste of trade union officials increasingly remote from their members.

Unity in action in a common struggle is a thousand times more important than mere organisational fusion. This is especially true given the existence of large numbers of Black Consciousness inspired union members who remain outside COSATU, and of black members in the Trade Union Congress of South Africa (TUCSA).

The new federation must use the enthusiasm and momentum now established to recruit the bulk of non-union black labour to its ranks and build its unions along industrial lines. While advocating 'non-racialism' within the working class organisations COSATU should nevertheless welcome the black-only unions to its ranks without demanding that they change their own constitutions.

## THE FALSE LEADERSHIP OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

More decisive, however, for the future of the South African revolution is how the unions will answer the question: What political role shall we play? Two answers hold the stage today. In the first place, Popular Frontism. Some unions (CUSA, MGWU, FACTU) have endorsed the politics of the United Democratic Front (and hence the ANC). Along this road lies the betrayal of the proletariat's independent class interests in the name of the 'national revolution' against Apartheid.



Other unions - such as those previously in FOSATU - have rejected this road, but only to date negatively. They have embraced Economism. While these unions proclaim the 'independence' of the unions from popular front parties they do so in a manner which confines the unions to economic issues, leaving the field clear for the UDF/ANC to dominate the POLITICAL struggle. Economism cannot be a barrier to class collaboration politics since it itself hands over politics to the forces of the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie. The trade unions cannot in real life avoid political struggle.

The alternative that faces the organised working class is not 'politics or no politics' but whether the working class shall lead the political struggle or be led. Whether it will fight for its own class political objectives or see its strength used in the interests of other classes, its present and future exploiters.

The grip of Popular Frontism is tightening over the black unions. The growing mass support for the ANC/UDF among unorganised black workers and in the townships has intensified the pressure upon the 'economists' to recognise the leading role of the ANC in the political struggle. It is therefore vital that, when the black unions enter the struggle against Botha around political slogans, the scope and duration of this action should not be controlled by the popular front. Only if the workers' economic organisations take up the task of forming a political leadership - a party with a programme for working class power - will the dangers of economism and popular frontism be overcome.

In the short term the ANC is likely to increase its influence in COSATU. However, the likelihood of attacks on COSATU by the Apartheid state and the subsequent deepening of the class struggle opens a real opportunity for revolutionaries within COSATU to expose the ANC's conciliatory popular frontism.

There are many political forces in South Africa who are enemies of the independent struggle of the working class and relentless opponents of a revolutionary party which would fight to lead this struggle with the programme of permanent revolution. Chief among them is the African National Congress. This is a petty bourgeois Nationalist formation dominated politically by the Stalinist South African Communist Party (SACP). Through its 'legal' front - the UDF - and through control of the students' organisation COSA, the ANC exercises considerable influence.

Its programme, since the 1950s, has been furnished by the SACP and is thoroughly Stalinist. It defines the impending revolution against apartheid as a bourgeois-democratic one. From the 1920s through the Freedom Charter until today, the ANC's programme subordinates the workers' movement to a 'peoples front' of petty bourgeois and bourgeois nationalists and abandons the 'historic goal' of socialism to a distant future in favour of an idealised version of bourgeois democracy.

This strategy is reactionary and utopian. It is reactionary since it hands leadership of the revolution to the petty bourgeoisie - a class which at the critical moment and because of its many ties with the bourgeoisie will abandon the proletariat and rural poor to satisfy its own demands.

It is utopian, because the ANC's 'democracy' is not attainable or sustainable 'on the basis of a crisis-racked capitalism in the last quarter of the 20th century. Bonapartism presiding over weak capitalism and dominating the workers and poor peasants (as in Zimbabwe) or a revolutionary workers' government expropriating capitalist property are the choices that confront South Africa's impending proletarian revolution.



The Sharpeville massacre, 1960

## GUERRILLA STRUGGLE

15. The strategy and tactics of the ANC have oscillated between a civil rights protest movement and guerrillaism, or a combination of both. The civil rights protest dissipated the potential of mass struggles to overthrow the Apartheid state; guerrillaism arose on the basis of the defeat and subsiding of the mass struggle and served to deepen and confirm that ebb in mass resistance. Combined with a fetishism of illegality, and a scornful, sectarian attitude to the emergence of the new trade unions, the ANC and SACP have conducted the armed struggle on the margins of the mass movement. Indeed, it has been the spontaneous struggles of the townships not the armed actions of the ANC which have shaken the regime.

Whilst of course it is the duty of all revolutionaries to defend the ANC's freedom fighters against the racist state, guerrilla actions and sabotage EVEN AT a period of mass upheaval like the present should play at the most an auxiliary role since the task of a revolutionary vanguard is to start the process of training and arming the masses.

For revolutionary communists the tactics of the armed struggle must relate to the actions of the masses at every stage. The best way for this to occur in the first instance is to organise the DEFENCE of protests, strikes, boycotts, the need to prevent evictions, the organisation of land seizures. Through these tasks a workers' militia can be formed which, tied to the growth and development of the mass proletarian struggle (strikes,



General Strike), can move forward from defensive actions through the seizure of the factories, to the organisation of the insurrection itself.

16. The black masses of South Africa must be alerted to the dangers of the ANC/UDF. The reaction of the ANC to the toothless measures of the Commonwealth Conference, the Zambian discussions with the leading figures of South African capitalism - all indicate that in the desperate search for a 'community of interest' between black workers and progressive sections of domestic capital, the ANC may well boycott its own democratic programme and settle for an agreement short of one person - one vote; or concede 'constitutional guarantees', i.e. economic and political power, to the white minority.

17. Through the UDF the Church exercises considerable political influence over the black masses. Where political and cultural life has been brutally restricted for decades, where poverty and oppression triumphs, there the church reaps the benefit, becomes a focus for opposition and resistance. But Tutu and Boesak preach peace and non-violence in the face of state murder; they court the liberal and democratic sympathies of European and US imperialism (Boesak organised Kennedy's tour) and therefore distance themselves from appeals to the international labour movement. With due sensitivity to the deeply held religious convictions of the masses, revolutionaries must - through their slogans and demands - seek to drive a wedge between the workers and youth who overflow the churches and the Tutus and Boesaks whose shallow demagoguery flows uninterruptedly from the pulpits.



Boesak and Tutu  
Leaders of UDF.  
Below - UDF rally banner.



## THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS AND LEFT CRITICS OF THE A.N.C.

18. An alternative leadership to the Stalinists and the ANC seems to be provided by the National Forum Committee and its most important constituent organisation, the Azanian Peoples Organisation (AZAPO). The NFC/AZAPO forces make very wide-ranging criticisms of the UDF. The NFC's 'Manifesto of the Azanian People' claims to put the struggle for national liberation in South Africa on a socialist course.

They denounce the UDF as a Popular Front. A component of the NFC, the Cape Action League (CAL), rejects alliances with the bourgeoisie. The apparent rejection of both the popular front strategy of the Stalinists and the stage-ist 'Freedom Charter' represents both the continued influence of 'Trotskyism', albeit of a centrist liquidationist current, and the pressure towards class independence emanating from the growth of the black proletariat and its independent trade unions.

19. The other, indeed the major political influence in the NFC/AZAPO is the Black Consciousness movement. Whilst this was born in the community and school student struggles of the early and mid-seventies it took much from earlier 'Africanist' traditions as well as the US Black Power current. While rejecting the SACP/ANC tradition they also rejected class analysis altogether. Steve Biko argued for black banks and black businesses. The movement centred on community welfare and educational projects. It undoubtedly aided a new generation of young blacks, overcoming the divisions into which the Apartheid state sought and seeks to split the oppressed masses.

20. Whilst the NFC/AZAPO have moved sharply to the left they have not been able to stem the growth of the ANC's influence. Their programme is not a coherent alternative to that of the ANC. They talk about a 'maximum programme of socialist transformation', but between this and a series of 'rights' to work, to free education, decent housing, health, legal and community services, there is no bridge of transitional demands. They have no clear conception of democratic demands and how the fight for them should play a central role in the overthrow of the Apartheid state. On the national question, in rejecting the regime's attempt to split the oppressed, in rejecting the SACP/ANC's 'multiracialism', insisting on 'One Azania, One Nation', they reject the democratic right of self-determination for the oppressed peoples. To do this can strengthen separatism and fears of oppression in a future South Africa/Azania amongst minority peoples within the struggle against apartheid.

The left wing of the NFC, the Cape Action League, despite its apparent rejection of the Popular Front, in fact opens the road to it by advocating strategic alliances with petty bourgeois nationalism, even to the extent of a common party.



## THE PROGRAMME FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN REVOLUTION

Also, the Black Consciousness tradition does not produce a correct orientation vis a vis the trade unions. Supporters of this tendency organise the AZACTU and are influential in the CUSA federations. They fight against being drawn into the UDF popular front behind slogans of non-political trade unionism. This is a doubly false policy when the unions are faced with the task of leading the mass resistance to Botha's crackdown. All fighting unions should be within COSATU seeking to direct the half-million strong black unions towards a general strike and towards forming a workers' party.

Of course revolutionary communists should direct much of their propaganda and wherever necessary work within the left and Black Consciousness organisations in order to show that opposition to the popular front, and espousal of working class independence, requires working class political leadership, through a Leninist combat party, in the struggle to make the South African revolution permanent.

### FOR A FIGHTING MASS WORKERS PARTY

The need for an independent working class party with a programme for working class power becomes daily more urgent. The immediate danger facing the black proletariat is that the heroic resistance of the youth, unemployed and women in the townships - seeking to defend themselves from police and army harassment - will exhaust itself before the black trade unions enter the fray around political slogans and for political revolutionary goals. Rather than leaving the political leadership in the hands of the UDF/ANC, the trade unions must be called upon to build an independent class party of the proletariat. In this work it is clear that revolutionaries will have to fight alongside workers and leaders who as yet do not see that such a party must become a revolutionary communist combat party. The decision on the party's programme and final structure must be the outcome of democratic internal debate and the free competition of tendencies.

Doubtless forces will arise which will seek to direct the workers' party onto the road of a reformist labour party. If the unions actually take up its formation, Stalinism, despite its opposition to any mass independent workers' party, will certainly intervene to direct it into a class collaborationist popular front strategy. Against these tendencies, revolutionaries must fight to define the party, in struggle, on the basis of an action programme which starts from the immediate revolutionary-democratic task of smashing Apartheid and shows how this must be continued into the seizure of political power by the working class. In the process, revolutionaries would have to fight for the structures and organisations of a mass Leninist combat party - drawing in all the militants of the unions, the youth, the women and the rural workers. Only such an organisation could survive the brutal repression and illegality that is ever present in South Africa.

In the developing revolutionary situation in South Africa the proletariat alone can lead all of the oppressed masses to victory against the racist state and against capitalism and imperialism. While the revolution has begun as a democratic one, it must not be confined to a democratic stage. Permanent revolution can, alone, guarantee the completion of democratic tasks by fusing the struggle for democracy inextricably with the struggle for socialist revolution. To take this road the proletariat must solve, in struggle, its crisis of leadership.

A revolutionary leadership must be forged in the present struggle. The hallmark of a revolutionary party is its programme. In South Africa a revolutionary action programme must link the struggle for immediate and democratic demands with the struggle for proletarian power. It must be a transitional programme.

The struggles around rents, education, against forced removals and for the consumer boycotts have been centred on the townships. They have shown both the determination and ability of the youth and women to lead mass mobilisations against the Apartheid state. These actions must be defended and supported by the organised working class through building joint action councils and militias. The townships on their own cannot defeat either the Apartheid state or its particular laws and state forces. They can be isolated, surrounded and smashed. They cannot paralyse the regime.

In the struggle against the regime an advance from localised battles must be made. The trade unions must take the lead in launching a general strike. Only the political General Strike can mobilise the entire oppressed, led by the working class, for a direct confrontation with the regime. It can pave the way for the question of power to be posed point blank. It can, if it develops into an insurrection, answer that question in a revolutionary fashion. It can draw into it the youth of the townships and colleges, the unemployed, the women and the unorganised, fusing all of the local and partial struggles.

Democratic slogans are of central importance in the revolutionary programme for South Africa. The masses are crying out for political rights. In every sphere of struggle - the workplace, the townships, the homelands, education - the masses come daily face to face with the absence of elementary democratic rights. Their illusions in democratic rights alone as the solution to their exploitation and oppression, and their illusions in leaders who would compromise in the struggle for political democracy, make it all the more vital that revolutionaries take up and fight to lead the struggle for the full realisation of the democratic aspirations of the masses. These cannot be achieved by any form of compromise with, or concessions from, the Apartheid state. That regime is incompatible with political democracy for the black masses.



In place of negotiated concessions, the proletariat and oppressed must fight for:

- \* The destruction of the Apartheid state and ALL its discriminatory laws and regulations denying permanent residency rights, equal status etc. to the black masses.

- \* Universal, equal suffrage for all people over the age of 16.

- \* The break up of the standing army and police and their replacement with a people's militia.

- \* Down with the Balkanisation of South Africa. For a united republic, but with the provision of the right to self-determination, up to and including separation of any people excluding the white oppressor community.

- \* For an end to imperialist secret diplomacy. Renounce all treaties made by imperialism. Support the struggles of the African masses against imperialism and its agents.

- \* Abolition of the barbarous separation of the family that is imposed by Apartheid. For complete freedom in the relations between men, women and children.

- \* For a sovereign Constituent Assembly to be convened immediately open to all parties, excluding the counter-revolutionary ones who seek to maintain or re-impose the Apartheid order.

## THE AGRARIAN PROGRAMME

The engine of the South African revolution will be the urban black proletariat, but it must also seek allies amongst the millions of rural blacks, most immediately with the 1.4 million rural proletarians working on white-owned farms - the natural agents of democratic collectivisation.

But this is not enough. Though South Africa lacks a large peasantry in the classic sense, and the establishment of millions of atomised small holdings is not in the proletariat's interest, millions are condemned to poverty and starvation in the 'homelands' and other rural areas. There are, in addition, many "squatters" and illegal occupiers of abandoned white-owned land. These layers cannot be mobilised for the revolution without the leadership of the concentrated urban workers, who must encourage and support the establishment of rural soviets to develop and express the needs and aspirations of the rural masses, soviets whose programme would include:

- \* Assist in the development of a plan that can ensure the land is utilised to the maximum benefit of the Azanian people.

- \* Seize the large "white" farms and wherever possible, collectivise them within a system of land nationalisation.

- \* Legitimise all illegal 'squatters' and occupiers of 'black spots' and abandoned "white" land.

- \* Discourage the breaking up of large holdings by the land hungry, while remaining willing to support the revolutionary seizure and break-up of large estates where this happens.

- \* Reach out to the families of migrant workers in the rest of southern Africa, helping to spread the revolution throughout the sub-continent.

## FIGHTING WOMEN'S OPPRESSION



The mass of black women must be mobilised against their own specific oppression, in an independent democratically organised movement, under revolutionary working class leadership, as a vital component of the permanent revolution.

Denied all rights as blacks, the women are further oppressed (i) as servant labour for the privileged whites; (ii) as extra-cheap labour in industry and services; (iii) as domestic slaves in their own families. Particularly harsh is the lot of women in the 'homelands' and other rural areas who bear children and are left to raise them in squalid housing conditions, often without their male partners for the long periods of their migration, and subsisting on tiny plots of soil with unreliable small remittances from their absent partners.

The absence of social and health services is a burden more crushing on black women than for any other section of the blacks. The Bantu and Church schools deny women the education that is vital to their own sexual self-determination, in particular for the control of their own fertility.



In order to mobilise the mass of oppressed women to their fullest potential and for their most important needs, the following must be fought for:

- \* Full unionisation of women workers, with the right of caucus, in industrial unions; equal pay and a minimum wage; equal opportunity in training and hiring; free workplace creches and paid maternity leave.

- \* Comprehensive sex education; free, safe contraception, sterilisation and abortion available on demand.

- \* Free comprehensive nationalised health services under working class control. A programme of public works under working class control to make adequate housing available.

- \* Free legal divorce at the request of one partner and adequate state maintenance for the dependents.

- \* A comprehensive social welfare system.

- \* Free community creches and nursery schools, subsidised community canteens as steps towards the socialisation of housework.

- \* Education and action in the mass organisations to combat all forms of sexual harassment and male chauvinism.

The task of winning democracy is in itself a revolutionary task in South Africa. The working class must not eschew politics. It must take its place at the forefront of the struggle. It must build factory and workplace councils to organise strikes, link up with township committees in the struggle. It must organise a militia based on these action councils. Such councils and such a militia can stop a Constituent Assembly being the plaything of those who wish to negotiate with imperialism and those who wish to construct a democratic obstacle to working class power. Such councils must become town-wide organisations, struggling against Apartheid AND providing a real alternative state power - SOVIET (Action Council) POWER.

To succeed in this struggle the South African proletariat must take the lead in organising and leading a mass insurrection. In breaking up the armed forces of Apartheid the opportunity exists to win the black rank and file from their white officers, to create black soldiers' councils, to elect officers and to mete out punishment to the racists.

The working class must never for one minute forget, or subordinate its own class demands in the present struggle. Better wages, an end to all discrimination in the workplace, shorter hours and better conditions, full union rights etc. must ALL be fought for. At the same time the working class must link these immediate demands to the political struggle for power. It must fight for:

- \* Workers' control of production, hiring and firing, speed and intensity of work, of safety and of the length of the working day.

- \* For workers' control over the length of the working week so that available work may be shared and the unemployed, including women, given jobs.

- \* For the protection of wages against inflation by a sliding scale of increases linked to price increases. For committees of the workers and women's organisations to decide on the workers' cost of living index and the wage increases needed, and on equal pay for women workers.

- \* For mass workplace based democracy - via the mass meeting, protected from the bosses and their thugs by WORKERS' DEFENCE SQUADS - to take all decisions requiring action and impose workers' control.

- \* Open the books of the capitalist enterprises to the inspection of the workers. The workers have had to pay in blood for the profit margins to be found in the ledgers of Anglo-American and the other corporations. They demand to see the extent of their exploitation, the better to end it.

- \* Nationalise without compensation and put under workers' control, the giant factories and industries owned by the white capitalists, and foreign capitalists.

To defend each and every one of its gains and to press home each and every one of its demands, the working class needs to take state power. Only such power can improve the lot of all of South Africa's oppressed masses. The workers' councils must not allow democracy in the shape of a Constituent Assembly to hinder it in the struggle for power. They must press on, relentlessly, to assert their own power under the slogan:

FOR A WORKERS' REPUBLIC  
OF SOUTH AFRICA/AZANIA!

The struggle of the South African masses against the Apartheid state and for proletarian revolution will have an enormous impact on the states in Southern Africa dominated by South African imperialism. It will progressively throw into crisis the regimes which have compromised and collaborated with the Apartheid state. In the struggle for workers' power, the South African masses must stand at the forefront of aiding and solidarising with the struggles which develop against the South African imperialists and their agents. A victorious proletarian revolution in South Africa would immediately take steps to spread the revolution beyond its borders, starting with the surrounding states previously dominated by South African imperialism. Only such a perspective "for a federation of Workers States of Southern Africa" would buttress the workers' republic of South Africa against the inevitable attack by imperialism and open the prospect of overcoming the economic and social distortions resulting from South African imperialism's domination of the surrounding states.

FOR A FEDERATION OF  
WORKERS' STATES OF SOUTHERN AFRICA!



# Remembering Jimmy Macken

On 16th March 1979, up to 30 of about 180 workers at two McDonalds hamburger restaurants in Dublin struck for union recognition and decent wages and working conditions. It was an important action against a brutally anti-union and exploitative company with a chain of 5,000 restaurants worldwide which were 95.5% non-union. Apart from its international significance, had the young Dublin workers won, it also could have given a new lead in unionising catering workers in Dublin for whom the ITGWU bureaucracy, and especially its No. 4 branch, had done scandalously little with its power and its base in the trade.

Jimmy Macken, from inner-city Dublin, a labourer most of his life, was one of the most determined fighters in that strike, just as he had been in trade union action for casual catering workers whose ranks he had joined in the mid 1970s. When militants from the unions and the left rallied around the O'Connell St. and Grafton St. strikers, building regular mass pickets at the "restaurants", the hated Mehigan, Dublin boss of McDonalds, got court action to limit the picketing. The ITGWU top bureaucrats - including Mickey Mullen - and No. 4 branch officials - ruled that the injunction had to be obeyed and even refused to allow picketing at the rear to prevent deliveries. Despite the All-Out-Picket of the ICTU, the restaurants' trade was only barely dented by appeals to customers, for supplies were not stopped, an all-too-common experience that verifies again and again the hypocrisy of the trade union leadership in reducing the Congress picket to an empty pretence unless it suits their sectional or caste interests.

Many people defied the injunction, including, briefly, two officials from the lower ranks of the Union. Jimmy Macken was the most stalwart in refusing to let the injunctions infringe one iota on his constant appeal for effective picketing action. For this principled stand the ITGWU expelled him. He was badly treated in more physical ways, too, by employees of the Union, but he was allowed no formal rights at all in his attempt to force an appeal against this brutal and treacherous decision. After 8 months and solicitors' letters, Mullen answered saying there was no right of appeal.

The boss, Mehigan, had the assistance of heavies from the USA who were frequently to be seen watching strikers. He himself used to photograph the picket lines. He also had the services of the Special Branch who visited and harassed strikers.

Union treachery, time and demoralisation wore down the strikers. Mehigan was shrewd enough when, under pressure of the long-running stand by the pickets, he did a deal with the ITGWU officials, conceding a vague form of union recognition, taking back the few strikers who had lasted the 6 months, and sacking Jimmy Macken. In the behind-closed-doors settlement the Union handed over a list of who was to be taken back. The list did not include Jimmy Macken. When on 17th Sept. Jimmy reported for work, Mehigan told him "you're not in the union!" The ITGWU trumpeted a victory in its journal and proceeded to let its gain be quickly whittled away until there was no union any more in McDonalds.

With the struggle exhausted, Jimmy Macken got support from a few activists in attempting the last resort of the "Unfair Dismissals Tribunal". When the hearing began the chairperson reprimanded McDonalds for their contempt in not having replied to the Tribunal's summons. The company should have lost the case on that ground alone but, as with such tribunals designed to preserve bourgeois order, it "overlooked" the contempt. Mehigan threw so much slanderous muck at Macken that he had to be restrained by the Chair and sent back to his corner to consult his American lawyer while his FUE representative tried to summon up a modicum of decorum for their side. On the other side, the Chair refused to accept any evidence about McDonalds' world-wide anti-union POLICY. Mehigan



was, incredibly, allowed argue that his company wasn't McDonalds, only trading as "McDonalds" under a franchise!

Jimmy's case was just one more proof of why workers should not rely upon this bosses' tribunal, any more than they should rely upon unelected, unaccountable union officials whose position and interest compels them to monopolise and choke the power and fighting ability of the rank and file.

Jimmy Macken was never to work again. For six years he endured misery and poverty while unemployment all around him trebled in scale. One later act of resistance was to fly the Starry Plough from the Gardiner St. tenement he shared with his father and brother, in a fight to be rehoused locally during the harsh slum clearances in that area. That, at least, was a partial success for them. But the defeat, misery and poverty literally broke his heart.

On the morning of 13 June 1985 he was found dead of a massive heart attack in his bed, aged 33. As so often with the oppressed of Dublin, he had no medical warning.

His memory will be served if his sacrifice renews our determination to build a revolutionary communist workers' movement that will settle final accounts with this system, a movement that will brook no treachery from the lieutenants of the bosses within the Unions, bureaucrats who, along with the likes of McDonalds, must share some of the responsibility for the extinguishing of this young life.



# **WORKERS MUST ACT DIRECTLY AGAINST APARTHEID!**

In the current situation of black mass struggle against the Apartheid state trade unionists must fight for every sort of direct action which can weaken the Pretoria regime and strengthen black resistance

## **TOTAL TRADE EMBARGO BY WORKERS!**

Trade union action must be taken at the ports to send all S.African goods back and block all exports. In making this call we reject all attempts to link this specific action in support of the current struggle to any permanent and chauvinist demands for import controls in favour of Irish capitalists.

Workers in banks and insurance must black all financial, commercial or insurance dealings with S.Africa or in connection with S.African trade. Cut off all telephone, telex, mail and travel links. Civil servants and university teachers etc. must break off all dealings with S.African institutions. Exceptions should be allowed only under workers' control where the direct struggle against Apartheid requires them.

## **BUILD JOINT TRADE UNION ACTION COMMITTEES**

- to organise and co-ordinate solidarity action and force the bosses to open the books on their dealings with the Apartheid economy. "Consumer boycotts" relying on atomised individual decisions are INEFFECTIVE and must never be supported as an alternative to direct embargos.

## **MAKE THE UNION LEADERS ACT NOW!**

Send immediate material aid to the independent black trade union organisations and demand such aid from the national union leaderships. Workplace, branch and Union solidarity messages should be won from democratic meetings to be sent immediately to the new trade union federation:

COSATU, 2 Goodhope St., Belville South,  
Cape 7530, S.Africa. Telex: 625374.

Develop direct links with S.African unions in struggle. Campaign for the release of all union and political activists imprisoned by the regime. Fight for sympathy strike action, especially in firms with subsidiaries and interests in S.Africa. Fight for mass trade-union based protests against the repression and against EEC, British and US collusion with Pretoria. For the breaking of all diplomatic links with S.Africa, kicking out ambassadors and turning over embassies to representatives of the liberation movements!

## **BREAK THROUGH THE LIMITS IMPOSED BY THE "ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT"**

"Anti-apartheid" campaigns have so far courted "progressive public opinion" to plead with the capitalist ruling class to "disengage" from S.Africa. While campaigns for trade unions to withdraw their funds from S.Africa-linked investments have a good propaganda value if the aim is to fight for real ACTION, they are NO substitute for this fight. And where such campaigns of "divestment" become a long-term strategy of "disinvestment", which would de-industrialise South Africa, we oppose them because they can only ultimately weaken the black working class as a social force. We call not for the closing of factories in S.Africa but for their occupation and expropriation by black workers. The call to break links is not a strategic goal but is tied to the specific situation of massive upsurge against Apartheid repression.

The fact that such campaign methods have been endorsed by the ANC and UDF is no surprise. These bodies are the product of a strategy to build a "Popular Front" which attempts to control and use workers' action as a mere adjunct to methods of class collaboration, e.g. talks with Pretoria's bosses and promises of a capitalist mixed economy "after Apartheid". (See the longer article on S.Africa in this journal.) This, the strategy of the S.African Communist Party, seeks to prevent and control from above any development towards independent working class action. It is a strategy that should in no way be allowed to determine solidarity actions outside South Africa. But it has done so up till now. Even the Dunne's Stores anti-apartheid strike was turned into a useful publicity focus for the middle-class liberals, the Churches and the Anti-Apartheid movement. It was NEVER made the starting point for wider WORKERS' ACTION!

## **HEROIC DUNNES STRIKERS BETRAYED**

Dunne's, the biggest Irish-owned supermarket chain, has made its owner filthy-rich through a savage system of extremely low-waged female labour under an authoritarian management deeply hostile to trade unionism. True to form, this leech had no qualms about helping the Apartheid system to suck blood from African workers by insisting on selling S.African fruit etc. even when the majority of supermarkets, under the pressure of the Dunne's strikers, saw better publicity in claiming they would phase out such trade.

The workers are organised unevenly, mainly by the Irish Distributive and Administrative Trade Union, a deeply conservative union headed, since 1983, by "socialist" John Mitchell, an unelected  
(this article continues on page 8)

# **PUT THE PICKETS BACK ON DUNNE'S NOW!**



CORRECTIONS: In page 2, middle of second column, 1960 should read as 1969.

In page 10, some text was omitted in the 2nd last paragraph of the first column. It should read as follows

"The motion was carried by 17 votes to 14, but declared lost when, with the prominent support of PD's Anne Speed, herself an unelected trade union official, it was ruled "the abstentions have it". Speed claimed that this was standard trade union practice. Indeed! The trade union bureaucracy is well served by this and many even worse etc.